

THE
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NERDOGRAM

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THE NETWORKED AGED NERDOGRAM

HOW TO HELP PEOPLE “DO THE RIGHT THING”

Hello all from rainy, dreary end of winter (nearly spring?), just the right month to remind ourselves of Uri Simonsohn’s conclusion (after studying the relationship with between college admission decisions and the weather) that “clouds make nerds look good”.

Because this is a cold, drab time, this month I have been thinking a lot about how to use behavioural science to do more of what is good for us, our communities or the planet.

So hopefully this month’s nerdogram will leave you in a positive frame of mind, whatever the weather.

I hope you enjoy it. Do get in touch if you’d like to discuss the below, or anything else.

Thanks, Kate



Kate Gomes, Head of Strategy, MHP

NERDOGRAM

NEED TO KNOWS

SEE INTO THE FUTURE

Connect to your future self to make smart decisions today

We all know we need to make better decisions. About what we eat, how we sleep, how we look after ourselves, our communities and the planet. But knowing how to do this is another matter.

A series of studies by Hal E Hershfeild could point to a clue we might not have considered: find a connection to your future self. On a series of topics, from financial planning to fitness his studies have shown that the better we can identify with our future self, the more likely we are to make decisions with positive future outcomes.

For communicators, this may mean taking the time to set the scene, before asking people to decide or act. Draw a picture of your audience's future self, desires and needs prior to asking them to make decisions which may delay gratification or make life more challenging today.

NO GIFT TOO SMALL

Is it time to gift brand bouncers?

Both human beings and brands struggle to drive reversion to past behaviours. Whether waking up early or buying a previously favoured cereal, once a habit is out of favour, its hard to see how to get it back on track.

One recent study in Nature points to some useful clues. Looking at over 50 drivers of gym attendance, the study concludes that one of the most successful routes was providing “inconsequential” (9-16c) enhanced rewards for returning to the gym after a missed session. And this wasn't one time only – this reward was provided for **every** return after **every** missed session.

As human beings, this reminds us to reward ourselves for getting back on track, rather than punish ourselves for what we have failed to do. But as communicators it is potentially even more interesting – as an industry we often reward people who return... once. But how could we better reward those who are brand bouncers, not brand loyalists and who often stray, when they return?



TIP THE SCALES IN YOUR FAVOUR

A nudge needs to provide options, but not the same number of each

Although disagreement remains about how much less, for whom, and health benefits overall, scientists are generally agreed that the world needs to eat less meat. And although we are eating less meat at home, this isn't always mirrored when we go out.

Luckily, a recent spate of studies have recently agreed that menu rebalancing is the answer. In one study, where 12% of people normally ordered vegetarian options, when the menu was altered and $\frac{3}{4}$ of options were vegetarian, 48% of people chose one of these.

For communicators, this is a reminder of a classic nudge tactic – skewing, rather than removing options. On the menus in the study, meat options were still made available, but the fact that the majority of options were meat free, encouraged a different decision.

GIVE TO GET

Capitalise on the fact that donations drive happiness

It's hard to come across someone who isn't trying to be a little bit happier. Whatever they define as the stepping stones to this end – time, wealth, relationships and many more – happiness is the aspired to result.

Recent research published in the Journal of Positive Psychology suggests that many of us have been going about this the wrong way. Looking at five studies, it concludes that we get happier by other -focussed activities (trying to make things better for other people) than by focussing on our own needs. At the

heart of this is the idea that a greater sense of connection is a key driver of happiness, and this involves others.

As communicators we often shy away from suggesting a person donate – in whatever form – because it will make them happier. But maybe we shouldn't. The science is there to suggest this is true, and as happiness is something for which so many are striving, it might be time to put it front and centre of our campaigns.

THE RULES OF INFLUENCE

At MHP Mischief, we apply three simple Rules of Influence - developed with Dr Tali Sharot and UCL's Affective Brain Lab - to think through every challenge. As we go along, we'll show how the Rules play out in the real world. But before we begin, let's quickly recap on what they are:

RULE ONE:

Who you are is as important as what you do.

Audiences are tribal and united around shared narratives and values. To engage people, organisations must show they (and the people who run them) share the same values.

RULE TWO:

Influencers and passions spread ideas

People follow people like themselves and they respond to passionate voices. Passionate storytellers and emotional stories are more effective.

RULE THREE:

Arguments are never won, outcomes are

People will reject challenging arguments, even if they are supported by facts. To persuade people, you can't tell them they're wrong, you have to change the conversation.

SOME HELPFULL LINKS

To learn more about communicating in a polarised world, download our Guide [here](#).

If you want to know more about any of the insights in this email – or talk to us more about how we think about audiences, please email me at kate.gomes@mhpc.com

And don't forget to check out our Networked Age library, including our Guides to 'The New Rules of Influence' and 'Communicating in a Polarised World'.

You can find everything here, including the Nerdogram:
mhpc.com/NetworkedAge

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