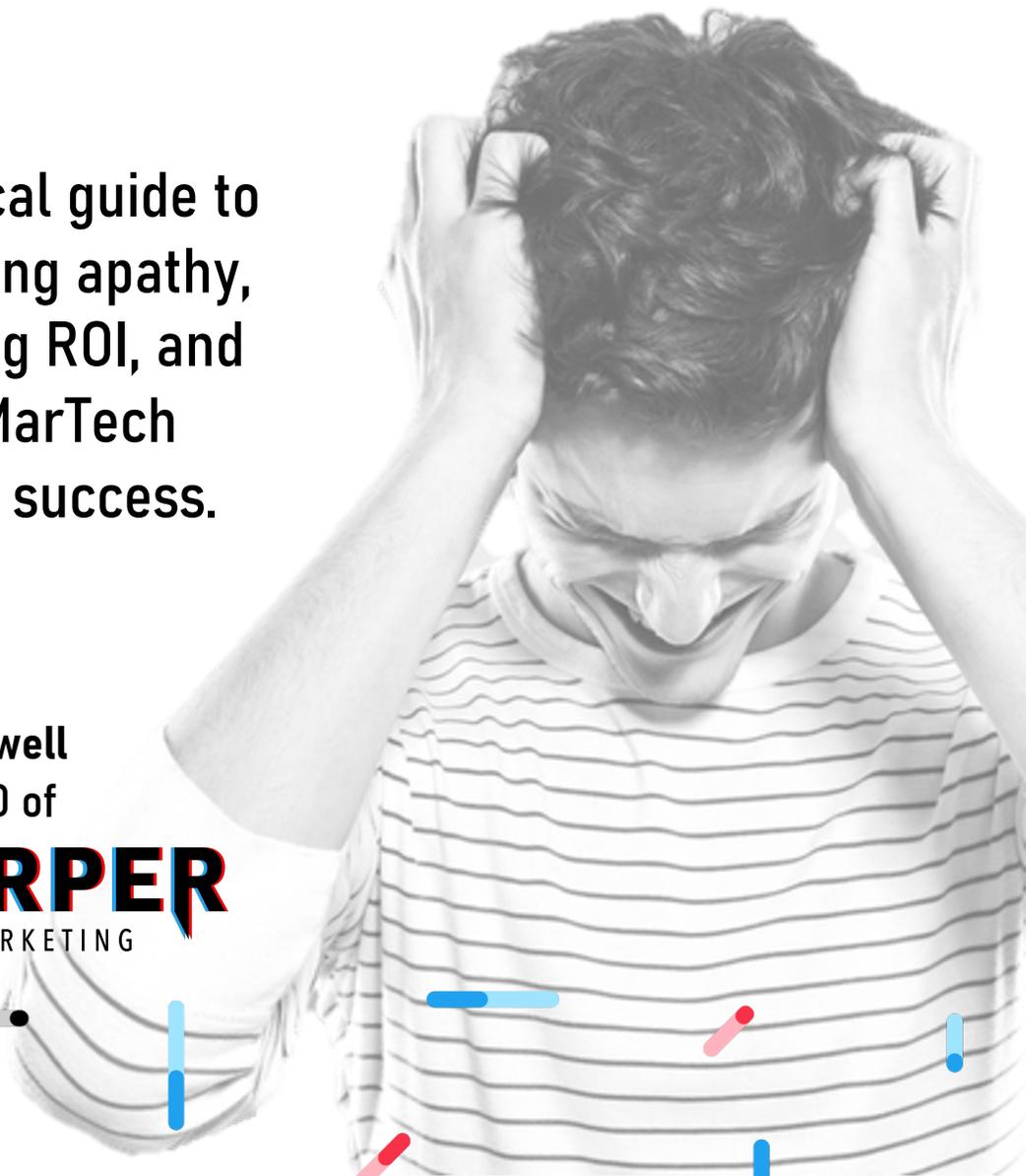


# How to get \*&@\$% people to use the \*&@\$% MarTech

A practical guide to conquering apathy, delivering ROI, and driving MarTech adoption success.

By Russ Powell  
Founder/MD of

**SHARPER**  
B2B MARKETING



# We all know the story.

You bring in a brand new, all-singing, all-dancing piece of MarTech. You've agonised over the decision, committing blood, sweat, tears and other bodily fluids to identify the perfect solution.

You've sorted the 2-year long licence agreement. You've got it all set up and ready to go – including ALL the bells and whistles.

You launch this absolute game changing piece of tech that is going to change the face of your business forever.

There's fanfare, balloons, you've even splashed out on commemorative t-shirts. And then...

Nothing. Diddly squat. It doesn't get used. It gathers digital dust. People are ambivalent.

And you're left with an enormous white elephant to explain. Scratching your head and trying to work out why people – those flipping people – can't see how awesome this new bit of tech really is and didn't get on board.

And it's a story that gets repeated.

Everywhere.



In every sector, in every organisation or every shape and size.

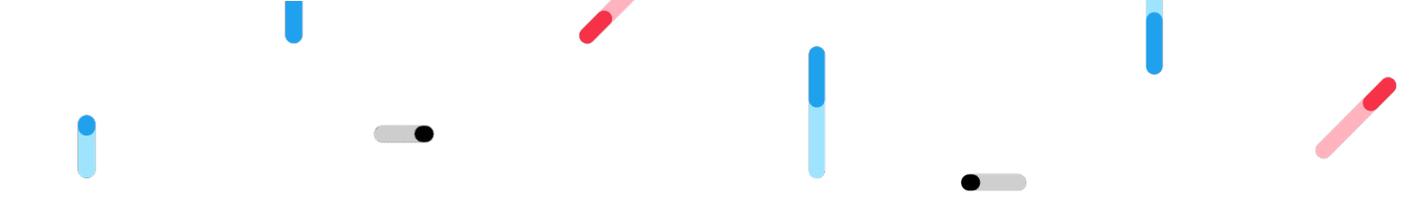
I'm willing to bet good money that everyone of us (including you, dear reader) has either been involved with or been on the end of a tech roll out that flopped and have counted the costs as a result.

And the cost with a flopped roll out isn't purely monetary.



Sure, there is the massive wedge of cash that's been used to bring in the system, but there's also the opportunity cost of this investment, not to mention the drain on people's time, effort, and life force as well as the potential reputational damage that can be done (both internally and externally).

- **But why does it happen?**
- **How can you avoid the same fate?**
- **And how can you make your MarTech investments positive ones?**



# What you currently hold in your hand (or have open on your screen) is going to help you answer these 3 questions.

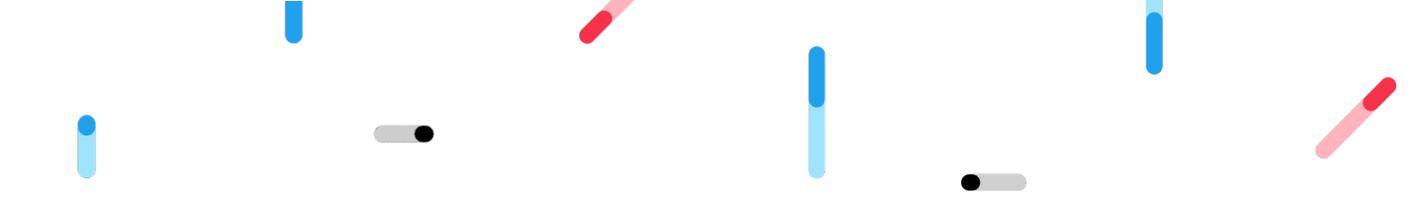
I'm going to give you the hints, tips and best practice advice – gathered from years spent on the front line and on both sides of the fence of MarTech roll outs, both good and bad – you need to conquer apathy, deliver ROI, and drive MarTech adoption success.

So, why do MarTech roll outs fail?

It is due to one factor and one factor only...



# PEOPLE



# The tech isn't the problem.

It's actually not even a real consideration.

In fact, when it comes to a tech roll out the tech itself is the last piece of the puzzle. The final thing you need to put in place.

It doesn't really matter what the MarTech is when you roll it out because you're not ACTUALLY asking or expecting people to adopt a new piece of MarTech.

**In reality, what you're actually asking or expecting them to do is change their behaviour.**

You're asking people to stop doing something one way and do it another.

You're asking them to give up their little habits and "hacks" they may have found of doing things.

And by introducing tech into the equation you're also asking people to do this in a logical, rational, process driven way – and despite anyone's protests or thoughts otherwise we are all inherently illogical and irrational creatures.

Every one of us does irrational, illogical things on a daily basis:

We say thank you to a cash machine

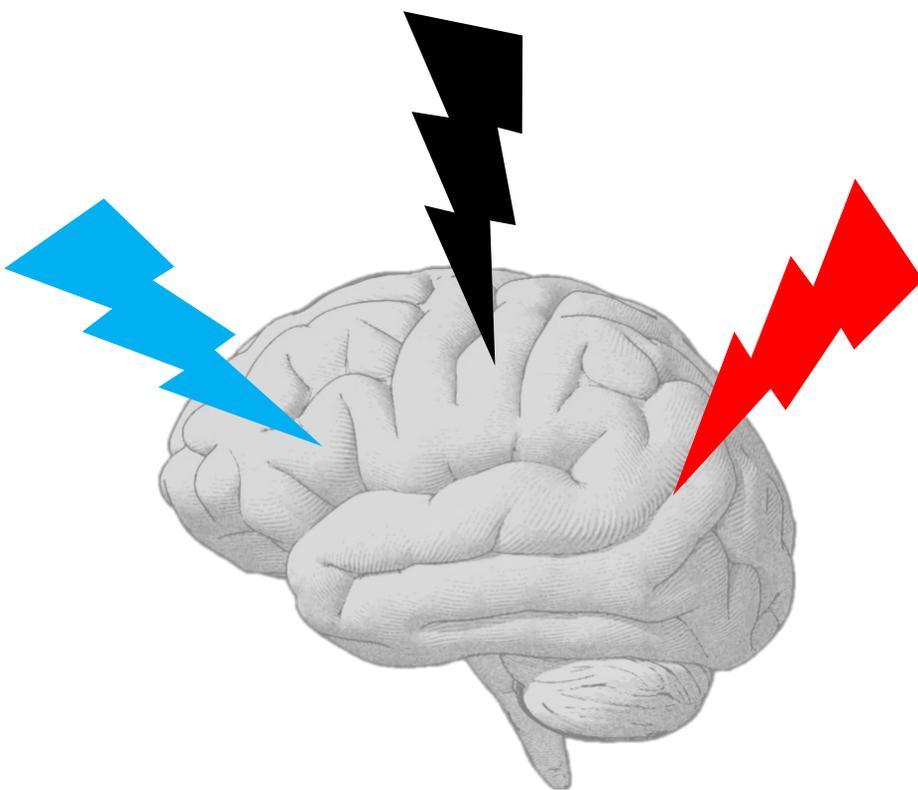
We apologise to a wall for bumping into it

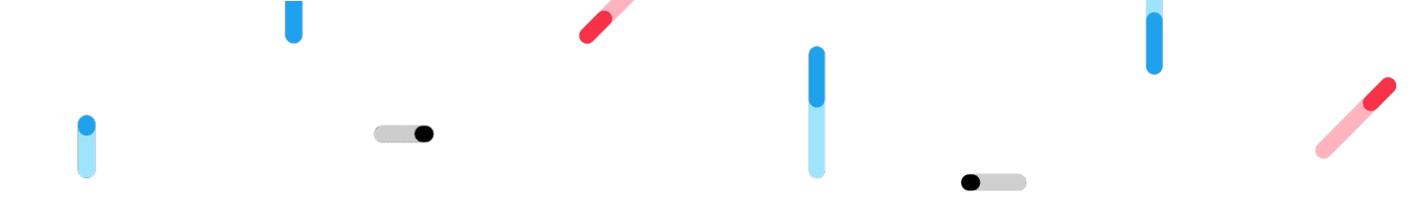
We have one sided conversations with our pets.

None of these things make any sense, yet we still assume (or even believe) that people are completely rational and logical and will think in neat patterns and lines when it comes to things like a tech roll out.

Our brains are essentially hunks of meat with electricity in them. There's nothing logical about us.

And because of this inherent irrationality behavioural change doesn't come easy.





# A BRIEF SIDEBAR: ROI

As we're talking about things in the context of behavioural change the traditional approach to calculating ROI doesn't necessarily apply. It's very hard (some would say impossible) to fully quantify the value of behavioural change.

How many £s does it take to get someone to change how they do things? How many £s did this behavioural change generate?

**In most cases both figures are zero.**

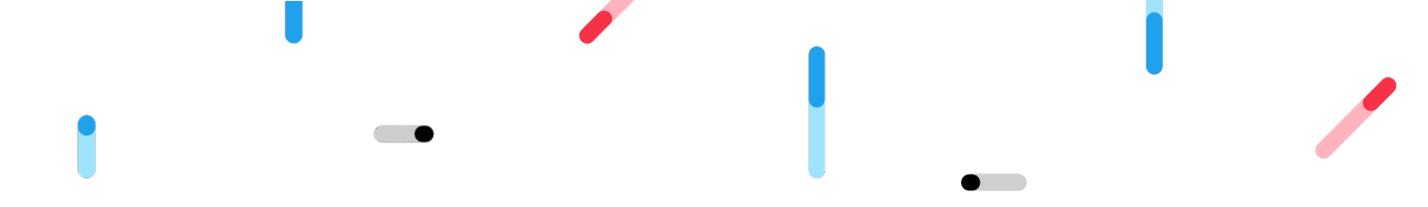
So, you can't really apply a linear £ in, £ out measure of ROI in this circumstance.

The real ROI in a new MarTech rollout then comes from driving user adoption.

So rather than £s we should be measuring the ROI of MarTech (especially at roll out stage) in terms of number of users, the rate of adoption, and time spent using it.

When you've got that bit nailed, then we can start talking about £s as a second order effect of getting this right.

Sidebar over.



# So how can you drive users to change their behaviour and actually “use”?

Headline: It's not easy. If it was this would be a very short book and I would be a millionaire.

Because of our inherent irrationality as humans there are typically 4 main hurdles that need to be overcome when trying to bring about behavioural change:

- **Hurdle 1: Cognitive overload**

We are all over stimulated and overloaded on a constant basis.

There is so much that we have to think about, process, and keep in our heads at any one time it's a marvel we're not all walking into walls (and apologising to them) on the regular.

Even now, in the last few minutes, who's phone has vibrated with a notification? Who's had something pop up on their screen? Who's considered their journey home? Who's wondering what the kids will be having for dinner?

Our attention and brain power is constantly demanded from an ever-growing variety of sources (both in our own heads and from external stimuli).

So, whilst this new piece of tech may be “just one more thing” we need to appreciate that it is “one more thing” piled on top of whopping great pile of other things that people are constantly doing a mental plate spinning act with.

The mental load people are under may be too great already, which means this new piece of tech gets forgotten about very quickly.

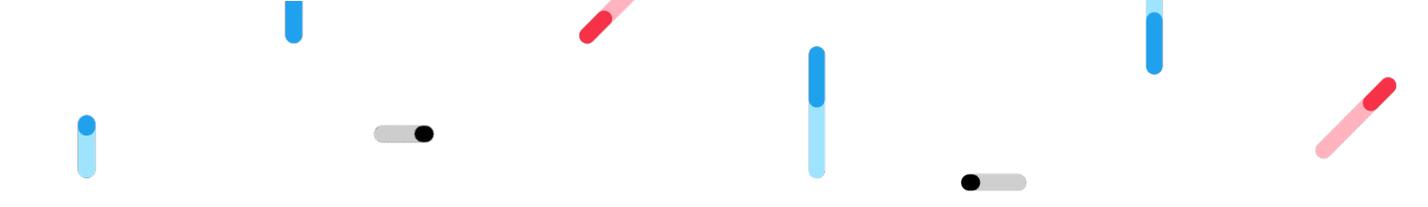
If considered at all.

- **Hurdle 2: Risk aversion**

People are hard wired, from an evolutionary standpoint to fear 2 things: Heights and loud noises.

And why do we fear these 2 things? Because they present risks and the unknown.





If you're up high, you could slip, you could trip, you risk falling. And whilst there's no danger in the falling itself, there is massive danger in what could happen when you suddenly stop at the bottom.

Loud noises could mean anything from a sabre tooth tiger leaping at you, to an explosion, to a deadly lightning storm.

Loud noises – and especially those that are unexpected – make us jump, they get our pulses racing, and cause adrenalin to pump around our bodies.

They represent the unknown. The unknown is seen as a risk, so the unknown is to be avoided.

So, when you're introducing something brand new to people, something that's unknown, it will probably be seen as a risk.

- Is this new piece of tech going to take up more of my time?
- Is it going to steal my job?
- Is it going to mean I have to learn loads of new stuff?
- Is it going to present a risk to me?

These may not seem like logical questions to ask, but we know that people aren't logical...

- **Hurdle 3: Status quo bias**

The other side of the risk aversion coin is status quo bias.

Status quo bias (also known as inertia) is when people prefer things to stay as they are – but, importantly they have to stay as they are without us doing anything.

If we're in a situation where nothing's going to change and we don't need to do anything to ensure nothing changes, then we are very happy little humans. Content, comfortable, untroubled little humans.

However, if we have to take action to ensure things don't change that's when risk aversion kicks back in again.



And change is a risk because it contains the unknown.

But here's the kicker, if there's a change coming we don't actually try and make the best of it. We try and make the least worst of it.

It's been proven across a variety of studies that the psychological pain of losing is deemed twice as powerful as the benefit of winning.

Basically, you're overall happier not losing £200 than you are winning £100. It's why we like to go with default options and things that are in "the middle" decision making-wise (known as satisficing).

So, it's important to remember this when it comes to the behavioural change you're trying to bring about with this martech roll out.

You don't have to make it the best it can be, you have to make it the least worst.



- **Hurdle 4: Perceived Friction**

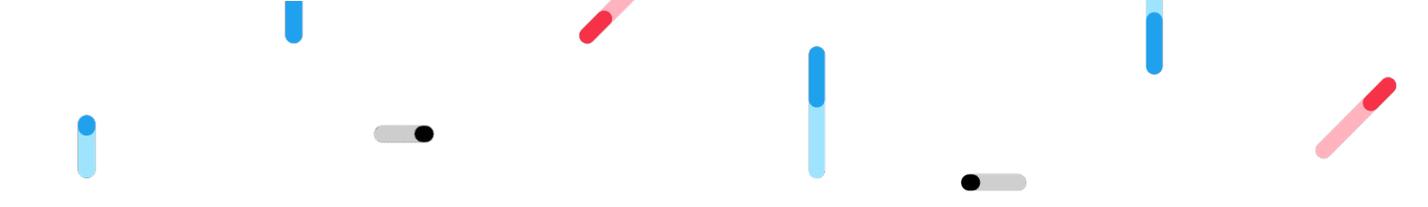
And making something the “least worst” it can be boils down to perception – which makes it very tricky to tackle as two people can perceive the same thing in very different ways – take our bird/rabbit below.

Your new tech could have the smoothest, easiest, most hassle-free interface imaginable. It could be like a stick of butter going down a waterslide.

But if people don't think or perceive it that way then they'll throw up their psychological barriers, go into risk aversion/status quo bias mode and you'll be left with a near vertical uphill battle to fight.



**So, with these 4 hurdles to overcome and everything that's going on in people's brains to navigate, just how can you get things right, get people to pay attention, and then get them to use the tech you're rolling out?**



# There are 5 things you need to nail:

- Meaning
- Autonomy
- Progress
- Relatedness
- Competence

(Now, I am a bit annoyed I couldn't turn this into a mnemonic and talk about "giving people cramp", and there are also other words you can spell with those letters, but there is an order to these things and the approach to take).

So first off, Meaning...

# Meaning.

Using the term 'meaning' might sound a bit grandiose but this is about giving people an answer to the question "why?"

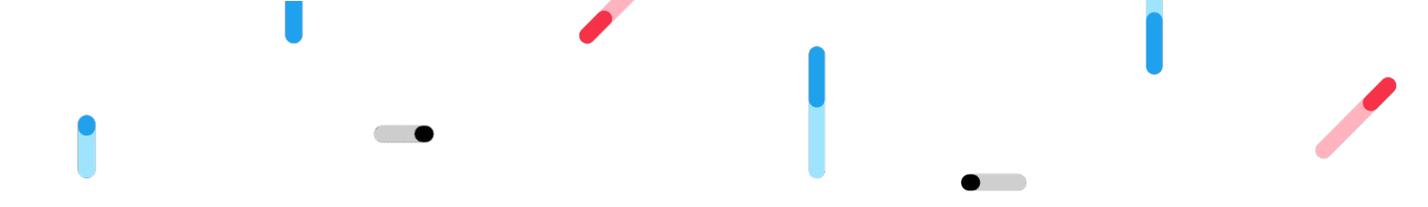
Sure, this thing is going to happen but why is it going to happen?

(And "because it is" isn't a valid answer here, unfortunately).

You may know the reasons and it might make perfect sense to you. But your understanding of why this is happening may be very different from those who are directly impacted and will need to adjust how they do things.

- What's the problem or challenge that's being addressed?
- What's the business need behind the decision?
- How is this going to make things better (or less worse)?
- What's the real-world value of this going to be for people?





What's key here though is rather than being 100% direct with the answer to the question of “why?” (and telling people what you want them to think) you can enable people to come to their own conclusions about the “why?” using different styles of communication and psychological nudges to guide them towards the “right” answer.

And that comes down to the level of autonomy you give people with things...

# Autonomy.

So, autonomy really works on a sliding scale.

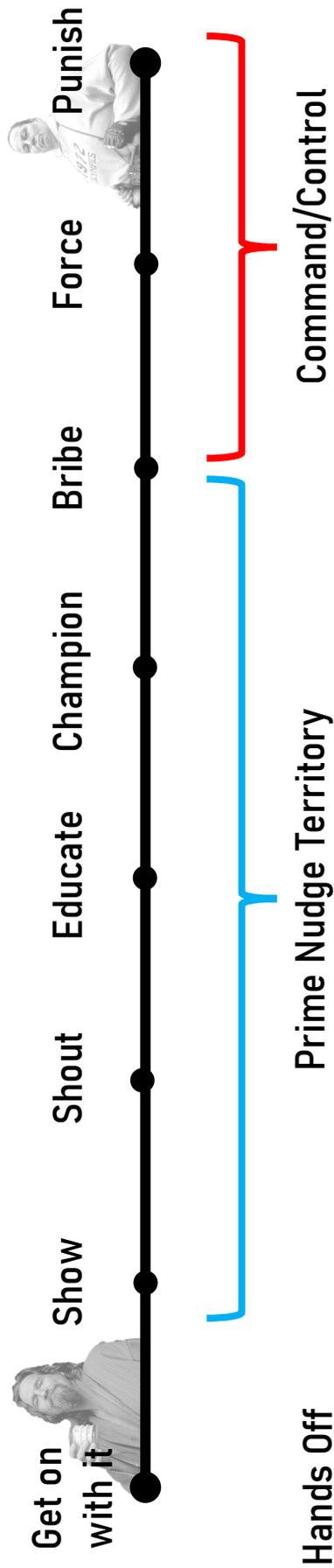
*(check it out on the next page)*

Depending on the approach you take you can be The Dude or you can be Miss Trunchbull (or any number of other random pop culture references in between).

This is about what's known as “choice architecture” and how you build communications, processes, and a roll out plan that encourages people to make the right choices (which then lead to the behavioural change and tech adoption you want).

What you often find however is that MarTech rollouts start at one end of the spectrum and when that doesn't work, they flip straight to the other.

# The Sharper B2B Sliding Scale of Autonomy

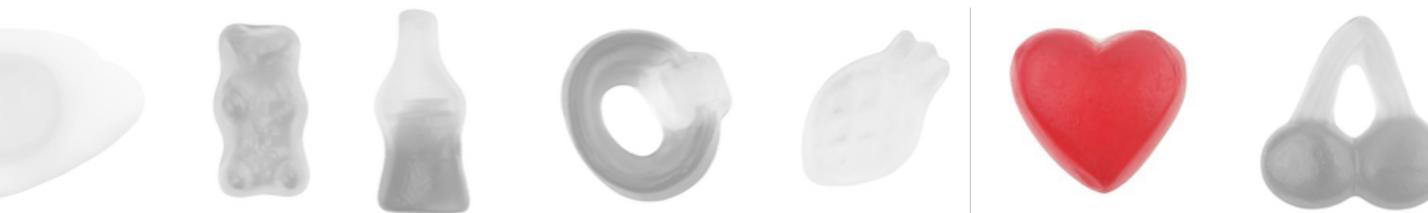


If you let people get on with it and that doesn't work the next step is "OK, well we'll MAKE them use it".

And if you start off forcing people to use something and that doesn't work then you throw up your hands and say "Well, we'll just let them get on with it".

The best approach to take is to firstly see what people will do of their own accord, then what they'll do with encouragement, and then if that doesn't work you can move to a more authoritarian approach – but be warned that's then tricky to ever come back from.

And there's a real sweet spot for nudges and using behavioural science and dare I say it, actually THINKING about what you're doing, that often gets missed by flipping from one end of the spectrum to the other so quickly.



So what do each of these points along the spectrum look and feel like, and how can you make best use of them to encourage people to make the right choices?

- **Get on with it**

**AKA “Here is a thing”**

As the name suggests, you just let people get on with it. You tell them the new MarTech is there, leave them to their own devices and then see what happens.

- **Show**

**AKA “Here’s a thing, isn’t it cool?”**

One step beyond telling people you actually give them some hints and tips and a view on why this is a good thing.

- **Shout**

**AKA “Look how COOL this cool thing is”**

This is about active promotion. You’re now starting to make a bit more noise and pull people towards finding out more and taking an interest.

- **Educate**

**AKA “Look how cool this cool thing is for all these reasons”**

Now you start to go deeper and a bit more “in your face” with getting people actively participating.

- **Champion**

**“Look how cool this cool thing is for all these reasons and look how cool Dave is for using it!”**

This is full blown promotion of the “cool thing”. You are tooting its horn and crucially tooting the horn of those people that have picked it up and started using it so far.

Now...

These first 5 steps on the autonomy spectrum are all prime nudge territory. You can be light touch enough to enable people to make their own discoveries, but you can still be involved enough to direct people where you'd like them to go.

Across these approaches is where you can weave in those all important nudges.

Exactly what those will be depends on the circumstance at hand but things like setting defaults, providing easy/hard options, using reminders, creating anchors, and the use of language can all be combined to nudge people in the direction you want them to go.

But at a certain point a nudge becomes a push, shove, or psychological wedgie that actually has a negative impact...



- **Bribe**

**“Check out this cool thing and we’ll give you a £10 lunch voucher (or something)”**

Sounds great on the surface but it’s a very quick burn and once the voucher is spent, what happens next?

“Well, I got a voucher last time I used this and I’m not now? No thanks”. A bribe only has a very short term motivational impact.

You can absolutely use rewards, but that reward needs to be intrinsic (in the mind of the person) rather than extrinsic (some stuff). More on this later on

- **Force**

**“You WILL use this cool thing!”**

Most people’s reaction to a direct instruction like that? “Nope”.

Command and control does work in some circumstances, but it absolutely won’t if you’re trying to get a human to change a pattern of behaviour – especially if you’ve failed to nail the answer to “why?” in the first place.



- **Punish**

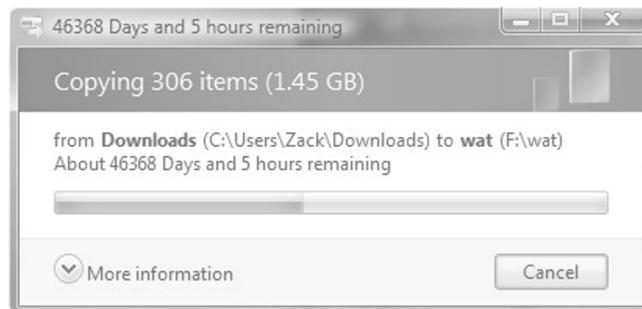
**“You WILL use this cool thing OR ELSE!”.**

Making things sound like a shake down by the police from the off means it's only going to go one way.

The threat of punishment actually does little to encourage or motivate people and actually punishing people does less still.

Remember. These aren't dogs, they're people.

# Progress.



So, once you've got people brought in and onboard, how do you keep them there?

With any sort of MarTech roll out or behavioural change programme people will want to know how they're doing, if they're succeeding, and how far off completion they are.

Basically, they want to know if they're doing ok.

This is where gamification and those intrinsic rewards I mentioned before come into play.

Now, gamification doesn't actually mean you need to turn everything into a game. You don't need to build Space Invaders or Boggle every time you want to do anything like this.

Gamification is actually about using game mechanics in non-game scenarios.

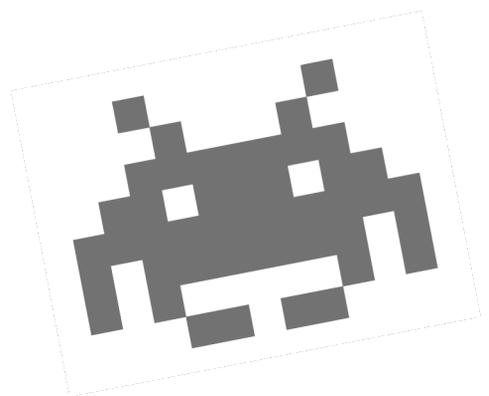
And what we mean by game mechanics is things like progress bars, point scoring, leader boards, unlocking levels and gaining achievements.

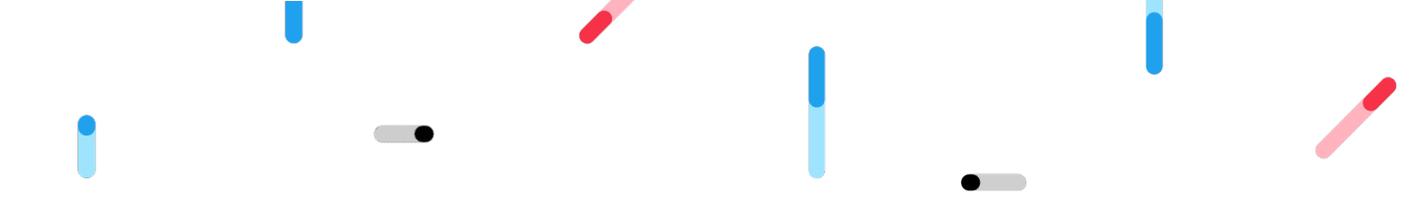
As an example:

When you book a flight (or any other kind of travel for that matter) you will have filled out all your information on various screens on an online portal.

As you go through the various screens making selections and filling out details there is usually a bar at the top of the screen that begins to fill and is filled by an amount proportional with your progress through the purchasing process until you were done.

That is gamification.





And those same ideas and approaches can be woven into any process to encourage deeper and also repeat engagement from people. Using gamification, the progress made becomes the intrinsic reward for people in and of itself. People want to do more because they want to do more.

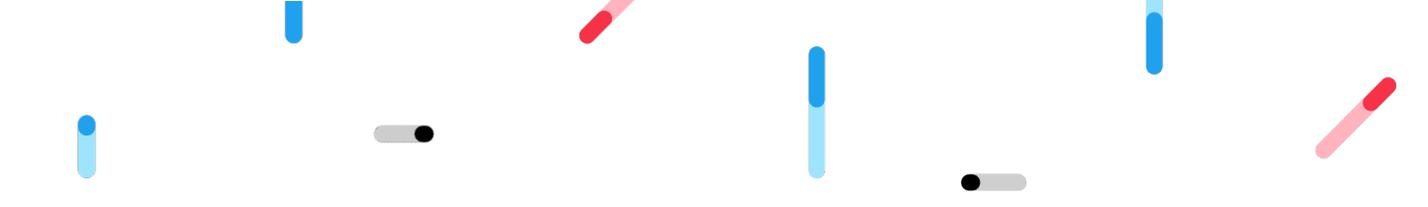
So, effective gamification and progress tracking can help massively with nudging people towards full adoption.

# Relatedness.

Relatedness, as the word suggests is all about making sure people can relate to what is going on – does it make sense to them – and also relate to other people going through the same things – am I in the same boat as others.

In an evolutionary sense we love being part of a group. The group means safety, security, and that you're part of something.

Being a lone wolf means you're not part of the “in group”, which makes it harder for survival and that you might get picked off by another actual wolf.



Sure, not a problem for most people anymore but the underlying way our brains work remains the same. We like being part of something.

So, when you're rolling out new systems, tools, or platforms you need to look at how you create a sense of "group" around it. How can you make use of the early adopters and those people actively engaging to encourage others to do the same?

This is where things like user groups, working committees, and social proof come into play – with social proof being very potent in terms of encouraging others.

It's why we love a case study and testimonial in B2B land. If you can get people to talk about what they've done, why they did it, and the success they've had – on a personal level – that becomes an incredibly powerful way to convince others – especially those in the same "in group" – to do the same.

# Competence.

And finally, competence. Do people feel like they're "getting it", doing well, and this new thing is actually adding value to their lives?

This is an extension or endpoint of the earlier point around gamification, intrinsic reward and progress. Once people have reached “the end” how do you then keep them engaged, involved and active with things?

This is when you can start to reach back into the earlier steps and have these people start to teach, encourage, and champion others essentially creating a self-fulfilling cycle of user adoption and pick up.

Because, as we said right at the top this is all about people.

And the best people to convince people to change their behaviour are people who've changed their behaviour themselves.



# You're almost there...

Having been through all of this there are then two final things you need to consider and weave into what you're going to be doing.

## Final Thing 1

The first is that this isn't "one and done".

This needs to be a continual and importantly consistent process if you want to encourage proper behavioural change.

If it's just done piece-meal without people having clear sight of their progress, how others are getting on, and the right level of autonomy to go about things in their own way people will disengage, lose interest, and quickly slip back into the old ways of doing things.

And cognitive overload, status quo bias, and risk aversion all kick in.



## Final Thing 2

The second is that this needs to be different for different people.

No two people will approach something in exactly the same way, so you need to ensure you can be sensitive and adapt things to how people like to do things.

Some people will get it first time, others won't engage until the last second (if at all).

Some people only need a single nudge, others need continual nudging.

Some people have a great memory, others need to be over-communicated to.

So, keeping people front of mind, giving them what they need, and helping them through things (as they need it) may take more time and effort to do, but it is the absolute best way to ensure that you can conquer apathy, deliver ROI and make your next MarTech roll out a roaring success.



## About Russ Powell

**(the chap who wrote what you've just read):**

Russ is a marketing heavy-weight with over a dozen years' experience on the client-side for some of the biggest names in B2B tech.

Russ is obsessed with understanding what makes people tick, coming up with weird and wonderful ideas, and melding the former with the later to create awesome marketing.

He's also an ex-stand up comic (which explains a lot) and Founder/MD of Sharper B2B Marketing.

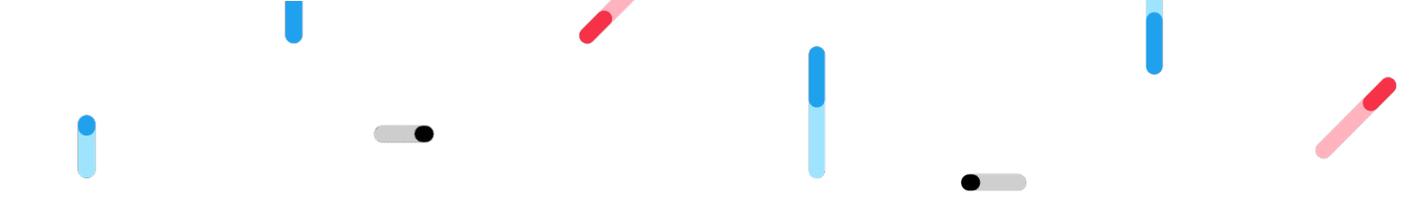
You can drop him a line at [Russ.Powell@sharperb2b.com](mailto:Russ.Powell@sharperb2b.com) if you so wish.

## About Sharper B2B Marketing:

Sharper give you the fresh ideas & firepower to absolutely nail your B2B marketing.

Sharper are on a mission to make B2B marketing as a whole more creative, valued, and commercially successful and do this through clever strategic thinking, wonderfully creative campaigns, and practical MarTech expertise.

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