

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Behaviour-Led Campaign Planning

Why campaigns built on awareness alone rarely change anything, and the five-step discipline that connects communications activity to measurable behaviour.

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Independent Strategic Marketing & Communications Consultancy

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The awareness trap

Most campaigns are commissioned to raise awareness and judged by how many people saw them. Yet nearly everyone is aware of things they do not act on. Knowledge is rarely the barrier: people fail to act because the action is effortful, the benefit feels distant, those around them behave differently, or the moment of decision passes without a prompt. None of these problems is solved by more visibility.

A campaign can be seen by millions and change nothing, because the barrier was never information. It was friction, habit or social context.

What behaviour-led means

A behaviour-led campaign starts from a precisely defined behaviour: a specific audience, doing a specific thing, in a specific situation. Every subsequent choice, from message and channel to timing and offer, is designed backwards from that behaviour. This is the reverse of conventional planning, which starts from what the organisation wants to say.

The five-step discipline

STEP	WHAT IT INVOLVES
1. Define the behaviour	Who, doing what, in which situation. "Raise awareness" is a hope; "visit on a quiet weekday", "book the check", "register before March" are behaviours. They can be counted.
2. Diagnose the barriers	For a person to act, capability, opportunity and motivation must align. Use research and observation to find which is missing. The diagnosis determines the intervention.
3. Select the levers	Framing, social proof, timely prompts, reducing effort, salient calls to action. These are ways of respecting how people actually decide, applied ethically and tested honestly.
4. Design around the moment of decision	Identify where and when the audience decides, and be present in that moment. A modest message at the point of decision routinely outperforms a large campaign far from it.
5. Evaluate behaviourally	If the objective is behaviour, the measures must be behavioural: an observable action, against a baseline, with a credible link between intervention and result.

A planning checklist

- Can the target behaviour be stated in one sentence, and counted?
- Do we know, from evidence rather than assumption, what currently prevents it?
- Does the plan state what the audience should think, feel and do differently?
- Is the call to action specific, easy and timed to the moment of decision?
- Was the baseline captured before activity began?
- Would we recognise failure if we saw it, and are we willing to?

Successful campaigns begin with clear behavioural objectives, not with a message looking for an audience.

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