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How to use the science of motivation
with the power of game design to
shift behaviour, shape culture and
make clever happen

DR JASON FOX



WILEY

If you are looking for a practical, science-based guide to leading change—then you must read this book! It is the ultimate guide for driving real progress.

—Dr Amantha Imber, Head Inventiologist of Inventium, Innovation Scientist and best-selling author of *The Creativity Formula*

~

This book explodes the myths of motivation and maps a world of willing, voluntary and enthusiastic work.

—Dan Gregory, Behavioural Strategist and Director of The Impossible Institute and *Gruen Planet* panellist

~

The Game Changer busts futile myths in motivational folklore, and takes an evidence-based approach to the (art and) science of driving change. You will benefit greatly from the insights and design intent evident in this cheekily heretical and iconoclastic game changer!

—Anders Sörman-Nilsson, Futurist and Founder of Thinqe and author of *Digilogue*

~

This is an extraordinary book—a complete game changer for motivation and influence.

—Matt Church, best-selling author of *Thought Leaders* and *Amplifiers*, and Founder of Thought Leaders Global

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First published in 2014 by John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd
42 McDougall St, Milton Qld 4064

Office also in Melbourne

Typeset in Weidemann Std 10/12.5 pt

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

Author:	Fox, Jason, 1983- author.
Title:	The Game Changer: how to use the science of motivation with the power of game design to shift behaviour, shape culture and make clever happen/Dr Jason Fox.
ISBN:	9780730307648 (pbk) 9780730307662 (ebook)
Notes:	Includes index.
Subjects:	Motivation (Psychology). Management. Games. Leadership. Employee motivation. Creative ability in business. Creative thinking. Corporate culture.
Dewey Number:	650.1

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Cover design by Xou Creative, www.xou.com.au

All illustrations by Dr Jason Fox

Printed in Singapore by C.O.S Printers Pte Ltd

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Game Changer

noun: a newly introduced element or factor that changes an existing situation or activity in a significant way

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Jason Fox is a global authority on motivation strategy and design, and he's on an epic quest to liberate the world from poorly designed work.

After sneaking into the Ivory Towers of academia and levelling up with a PhD in record time, Jason now works with forward-thinking business leaders, showing them how to use the best elements of motivation science and game design to influence behaviour, drive progress and make clever happen.

He has advised on motivation strategy, change management and good gamification design to a range of organisations —from multinational companies like PepsiCo, Gartner and Toyota; to the big banks, universities, mining, telecommunication and pharmaceutical companies; right through to grassroots educational organisations and savvy startups.

Jason lives in Melbourne, Australia, the hipster capital of beards and good coffee. When not gallivanting around the world speaking at events (as the science-based alternative to the fist-pumping rah-rah motivational corporate speakers) or immersed in game-changing work with clients, Jason enjoys partaking in extreme sports like reading, coffee snobbery and *fruit ninja*.

Learn more at www.drjasonfox.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a book is bloody hard work. I'd love to pretend that I gamed my own motivation, and that the whole thing was double rainbows, unicorns and cupcakes—but the fact is this book would not have been possible without the support of some truly inspiring people. The type of folk you feel lucky to have met and have in your life. The people that keep you real, and actively contribute to your quest.

For me, this adventure was kickstarted by my good mates and thought leaders Matt Church, Darren Hill and Peter Cook. They've all published brilliant books with Wiley, and all worked to sneak me in the back door to speak to the right people (and helped to keep me on track). You guys are legendary.

Those right people at Wiley were Kristen, Elizabeth and Keira—all super brilliant. Kristen was enthusiastic and supportive of the concept right from the start. Thank you for helping me to keep the book funky and fresh. And Elizabeth, thank you for being so kind and patient during those prolonged bouts of perfectionism.

This book wouldn't be the book it is without the help of a professional editor. I've got to give a big thanks to Jem Bates, who has completely revolutionised my perceptions of the editing process. His thorough, empathetic and constructive approach has made this a much better book.

I must also give thanks for some of the support I had on the sidelines. Jen Storey, your editing help early in the game got me across the line a number of times—thanks for contributing your wit and helping to dig me out of a few ruts. And Russel Remigio, my 'Wonderuss' assistant—thank you for embarking upon the obscure research quests that contributed to this book (and curtailing the entropy in my absence).

Of course there's also the family and friends one neglects as they conquer a project like this. Thanks guys for still liking me, even as I become ever more obscure.

And then there are the clients I've had the honour of working with. You've all helped shape the ideas in this book, and I'm mighty grateful.

But the biggest thanks of all must go to my gorgeous wife, Kim Lam (aka 'Dangerlam'). This book would not be possible without her. Kim has supported me throughout it all. Even when I was away working with clients overseas, and writing this book instead of cooking dinner, or bringing the laptop to restaurants to work on this through dinner, Kim has been ridiculously supportive of this project. Thank you darling, for the light and the laughter you bring to my every day. I love you to bits.

Ah! And thanks to you too. For being the type that reads the acknowledgements, and of course for supporting this book. I'm already liking the cut of your jib. Hat tips to your magnificence! We're going to get along mighty fine...

THE BIG QUESTION: HOW DO YOU MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO DO GREAT WORK?

‘You can do it!’ roars the motivational speaker. ‘All you need to do is BELIEVE in your ability to ACHIEVE, and you will SUCCEED! Repeat after me: conceive, believe, achieve. Conceive, believe, achieve. Conceive, believe, achieve...’ Fist-pumps abound.

Except... you know motivation doesn’t work like that. You can inspire people—and be inspired—all you like. But unless you change the game, nothing changes. Inspiration is like milk: it expires. And what you’re left with is the work required to make your goals and ideas happen.

‘So let’s just offer a bonus reward’, says the manager, eager to see change happen. ‘If we offer a bonus, people will do it.’

And sure, you can change the game by adding in a reward. But, you’ll be shifting the motivational dynamics and potentially hobbling creativity and collaboration in the process. People might get so focused on the reward that they take shortcuts that undermine the whole process.

Motivation is a tricky thing. And work is changing.

To stay ahead of the game, and to make great things happen, we need to change the way we design our projects and processes so we can sustain and amplify the desire, or motivation, to do great things.

That’s what this book will show you—how to change the game so that work and change become inherently motivating.

‘What’s this talk of games?’ I hear you ask. Well, we’ll unpack that in glorious detail in chapter 6. But for now let’s roll with this: games are the interplay between goals, rules and feedback. A good game is a goal-driven, challenge-intense and

feedback-rich experience geared towards progress. These three components correlate to our modern understanding of intrinsic, non-contingent motivation—purpose, mastery and autonomy (more on this in chapter 3).

It so happens that you could take the definition of a game and apply it to nearly any meaningful project or process at work. All projects and work consist of goals, rules and feedback. But sometimes the goal is misaligned, the rules don't work or the feedback loops get out of whack. By changing the game, we can shift motivation and unlock progress.

*It's not you. It's **it**.*

For too long, many of us have been led to believe we need *more* motivation. If we don't have the motivation to work towards an important goal, or to drive ourselves to succeed, or to think differently, we feel that there must be something wrong with us. That we are somehow lazy or have a poor attitude.

But there's nothing wrong with us; we simply cannot function at high levels of motivation in all things at all times. Fact. But what we *can* do is craft the games that keep us motivated and aligned to progress the work that matters.

This book will show you how to drive motivation, not just through inspiration, or remuneration, but by fixing the structure of your goals, projects and work.

*It's not **dependent** upon you either.*

If you're leading a team, you'll know that it's hard work carrying the motivation torch all the time. You can give your rousing speeches, and you can put on a big event to kick off the year, and maintain a state of perpetual optimism—but what happens when you're not around? Does everything collapse into monotonous, repetitive automation?

This book will show you how to craft the games that will sustain the motivation of others and how to get your team doing great things, even when you're not around.

Old-school tools make for new-school fools.

We've all endured presentations on SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time based) goal setting. We've all heard sage adages like 'Whether

you think you can or you can't, you're right'. And many of us have experienced organisations that suffer from perpetual shiny-new-process syndrome, where there's a new fad program each year: 'Neurolinguistic programming? Oh yeah, we did that five years ago. Design thinking? Yep, we did that too. What's next?'

But we can do better than that.

Much of what we have traditionally learned about managing motivation came from the factory era, when the focus was on productivity, efficiency and performance. While this is still relevant for today's work, what's emerging, and what the old tools often fail to address, is the need for motivational dynamics that inspire and support creativity, collaboration and agility. These are the core ingredients for innovation, change and progress.

This book will show you how to use the right game elements to create the motivation needed to drive progress.

There's always a game at play.

This book isn't called *The Game Changer* simply because it's a catchy title. We're going to unpack some of the sophisticated design elements of games, combine them with what we know from the science of motivation, and apply these new rules to every project and process challenge at work.

Right now, more than half a billion people (the vast majority of whom are adult men and women) spend more than 5 billion hours each week playing online video games with a level of focused engagement that we just do not see at work. There's a heap of savvy that we can take from this phenomenon to apply to the game at play.

This is because there's always a game at play. And you, the game changer, must learn the rules—so that you can tweak, bend, break or remake them to get the results you want.

Abandon all hope. And fluff.

And so maybe this is all a bit too confronting. If you're searching for warm fuzzies and feel-good fluff, this probably isn't the book for you.

The world of motivational books is rife with inspiration and stories of hope. Inspiration is fine, as it's the precursor to aspiration and motivation. But hope? That's nice, but you don't need hope. Hope is only helpful when you're hopeless.

And you're not hopeless. You have the ability to make dramatic changes to the way you and the people around you progress to meaningful goals through work that matters.

So, let's abandon all hope and fluff. This book will give you the science to make game-changing work a reality.

Let's move beyond inspiration and the cult of success.

Now that we've got hope out of the way, let's rethink the cult of success. This book is going to encourage you to fail. The path to innovation and any meaningful growth, change and improvement is non-linear and fraught with failure.

This is not a new thing. It is estimated that gamers spend 80 per cent of their time failing, and Einstein reckons 'play is the highest form of research'.

Success is simply *a failure to fail*.

If that doesn't work for you, think of it like this: in science there is no such thing as failure, only disproven hypotheses. Thomas Edison, the famous and very prolific innovator, probably had this figured out best. He was quoted to have said, 'I have not failed—I've just found 10 000 ways that won't work'. Edison made a distinction between personal failure and failures in a particular *methodology*. And that's something this book will help you understand.

So, we can either retreat and cook up perfect new visions, goals and plans (note: there's no such thing), or we can tackle changes iteratively, conducting micro-experiments and launching progress-making games where it's safe (and smart) to fail fast.

If you're a perfectionist, I'm going to show you how to become a progressionist. And, if you're worried about failure, I'm going to show you how to reframe failure and make it work for *progress*.

For you, the game changer, there are only good games and games *yet to be made better*.

Culture is not the target.

Let's remember what we're doing here. This is about shifting what influences human behaviour. You've heard people talk about culture. You can't see it, and

you can't touch it—but you can *feel* it, and you know it's there. And you know it underpins all the results you get, good or bad.

But culture is something you can't tackle directly. So how do you change culture?

You use science, and you start with the right motivation design (see figure 0.1).

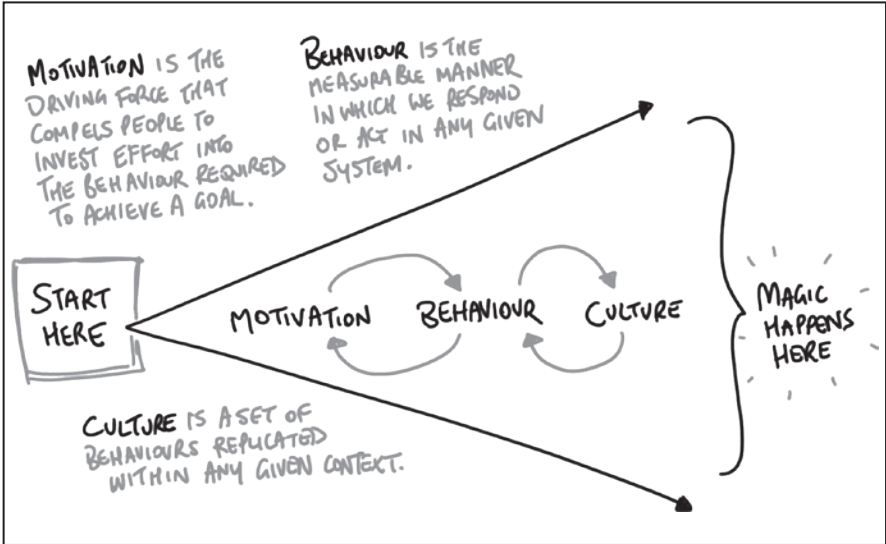


Figure 0.1: the precursors to culture

This book—particularly chapter 8—will show you how you can create the artefacts and implement the rituals that will begin the process of changing behaviour that, in turn, will shift the culture of your organisation or team.

It all starts with, and comes back to, motivation strategy and design.

Motivation is backwards—but you can set it right.

We're going to change things here, you and I. But not everything I share with you is going to work. There's no 'one-size-fits-all' magic silver bullet—but you know that.

And there are no hidden motivational secrets either, but there's a whole heap of savvy from the world of game design that just hasn't been translated clearly into real-world practice (until now).

But if we're going to make this work, there are three principles behind changing the game:

- 1. Motivation is part of a bigger, complex system.** To shift motivation we tweak the system, working from the outside in (rather than from the inside out, as most prescribe).
- 2. Change is the only constant.** Our game-changing work needs to be fluid, adaptive and iterative. We place more emphasis on proximal process than distant goals.
- 3. Progress is the only thing that matters.** Perfection, productivity, efficiency—all of these are secondary. If in doubt, always ask, 'Are we making progress happen?'

There we go, easy! Ha, maybe not. But, let's navigate through the uncharted waters of motivation design and see where we end up.

But where are my 'top ten tips'?

You won't be finding a simple set of instructions to follow mindlessly that'll make motivation, progress and change work. Not in this book.

There are far too many books out there dumbing motivation down to the point where people stop thinking about what they're doing. And that's the problem—we don't tackle motivation with the strategy and design required to make it work. Instead, we simply look to 'gold standards' that are old by the time they're recognised as gold. And then when we've got a supposed gold standard, we try to force-fit what works in one context into another.

Nah, we're not doing that here. Leadership author David Marquet says: 'If you want people to think, give them intent—not instruction'.

My intent with this book is to help you think about motivation, progress and change with more strategy and design. This book largely unpacks an *approach* you can take to solve any motivation challenge at work, to shift behaviour, shape culture and make clever happen.

The game changer is that newly introduced element that makes a significant difference to the game in play.

Sometimes I refer to the game changer as ‘you, the game changer’. In fact, there’s a whole chapter called that.

But it’s not really about you or me. Just as it’s rather lame for people to call themselves entrepreneurs on their business cards, game changers don’t call themselves game changers. They’re just people who tinker with the structures that influence motivation and shift behaviour.

A game changer is really a person who actively seeks, experiments with and implements new elements that lead to significant positive change. This might be the introduction of a competitive game element, heightened progress feedback, a narrative layer.

Speaking of which, you might be tempted to flick ahead to the juicy bits in chapters 7 and 8. Please don’t—not just yet. There are a few things we need to get working first in order to get the motivation strategy right, and to mitigate some of the shadow effects inherent within every motivation element. Otherwise we may end up stuck in the same cycle of short-sighted motivational ‘tips and tricks’ many managers and leaders succumb to.

So, stick around as we embark upon an epic quest to find the game changer and liberate the world from poorly designed work.