

The background of the slide features a collection of light bulbs. One bulb on the right is illuminated, casting a warm, yellowish glow. The other bulbs are unlit and appear as soft, out-of-focus shapes in the background. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, with a focus on the concept of ideas and innovation.

***Mindflick***

# The Knowing-Doing Gap

Why great ideas fail without action

A white paper

## 1.1 Mindflick Labs Insights Report

A few years ago, a global organisation invited its senior leaders to a cutting-edge leadership development programme. The participants were engaged, inspired, and eager to take what they'd learned back to their teams. They spent hours in workshops, brainstorming innovative strategies, and committing to bold new behaviours. But when researchers followed up a month later, they found that almost nothing had changed. Managers were still stuck in their old routines, teams hadn't adopted new strategies, and the organisation saw no improvement in its performance.

Sound familiar?

This isn't an isolated case. It's a common problem. Every year, companies around the world pour billions into training and development. Their people leave workshops with glowing reviews and fresh perspectives. And yet, only 15-20% of those investments result in meaningful change

<sup>1</sup>. The Knowing-Doing Gap—the chasm between what people know and what they do—is one of the most expensive problems in modern organisations <sup>2</sup>.

Companies around the world pour billions into training and development... yet, only 15–20% of those investments result in meaningful change.<sup>1</sup>





Think about the last time you attended a professional development session. You probably remember what it was about. You might even recall a powerful insight or two. But now ask yourself: What did I do differently because of it?

For many of us, the answer is often nothing at all. This reveals a hard truth: knowing is not enough. The real challenge lies in translating awareness into action.

So, why is this so difficult? Because behaviour change isn't just about knowing what to do—it's about having the motivation, the opportunity, and the environment to do it.

People don't change their behaviours simply because they've gained new knowledge. They change when they feel personally connected to the change, when nudged into action, and when they're supported by a culture that makes new habits stick.

Drawing on the latest insights from psychology, behavioural economics, neuroscience, healthcare, and sociology, we can build strategies to help us bridge the Knowing-Doing Gap. These strategies can be boiled down to three key principles, through which we can create the change we so often want (or maybe even need).

Let's explore how.



## 2.1 Principle 1: Make It Personal: Why One Size Doesn't Fit All



Imagine a manager sitting in a training session titled “Leading through Change”. The slides are polished, the speaker is compelling, and the room buzzes with energy. But there’s a catch: this manager already excels at leading change. Their real challenge is navigating difficult conversations with underperforming team members. They’re engaged throughout, but by the end of the session, they feel disheartened. The content was interesting, but it didn’t feel relevant.



This is where many initiatives fall short. They assume that everyone in the room needs the same thing, at the same time, in the same way. But that's rarely true. Human beings are complex. We're driven by our own goals, contexts, and aspirations. When interventions feel generic, they lack impact. When they feel personal, they can spark growth<sup>3</sup>

Personalisation is the antidote to disengagement. The most effective change efforts connect deeply with the individuals they are designed for. They speak to each person's specific goals, strengths, and challenges. When change feels personal, it becomes a source of motivation, not just another task to complete.



Take, for example, a sales team we recently worked with at Mindflick. We helped them move away from a one-size-fits-all approach to sales, equipping them with the tools to tailor their interactions and solutions to better connect with the needs of their clients. The impact was almost immediate: their conversations became more relevant and impactful. How do we know? The team saw a 220% increase in Client Net Promoter Scores, leading to a 38% increase in year-on-year sales growth<sup>4</sup>.

[\[Read the case study here\]](#)

**220%**

**Increase in Client Net Promoter Scores.**

**38%**

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This shows that personalisation isn't just a strategy—it's a powerful signal. It tells people, "You are valued". Whether it's in sales, learning, or any other area of change, when people feel heard and understood, they're far more likely to engage in interventions, adopt new behaviours, and realise tangible change.

**Prompt:** How can you personalise current initiatives so they are more aligned with individual needs?





## 3.1

# Principle 2: Deliver Lessons at the Right Time: The Science of Nudges

If you've ever tried developing a new skill—whether it's playing the guitar or improving your golf swing—you'll know that timing matters. A tip given at the wrong moment is easily forgotten, while the same advice, delivered just as you need it, can make all the difference. Learning works best when it's timely.

Yet most of us ignore this principle. We bombard people with information long

before it's needed. The result? People forget. Within a day, 50% of the information we don't apply is gone. After a month, 90% of it has disappeared. Behavioural scientists call this the Ebbinghaus Effect<sup>5</sup>. Others might call it frustrating.

The solution? Drip-feed knowledge over time, embedding it into the flow of work where it can be tested and applied. This approach—often called micro-learning—

breaks training into bite-sized, digestible chunks that are easy to apply. It's less about overwhelming people with everything they might need, and more about giving them exactly what they do need, precisely when they need it.

Nudge psychology offers powerful tools here. Indeed, small, timely nudges, can create seismic shifts in behaviour.





Consider the NHS. To tackle the problem of missed appointments, they started sending text message reminders to patients. A simple nudge—a text sent at the right moment—reduced no-shows by 25%, saving millions of pounds and improving patient care <sup>6</sup>.

This same principle also applies to other initiatives. For example, a manager

preparing for a difficult conversation might receive some tips to connect with a specific individual moments before their crucial meeting. Alternatively, an employee facing a complex project could get a nudge about breaking tasks into manageable steps.

Timely nudges don't just help people remember; they prompt action. By using nudges, we can transform the likelihood

of change. And in a world where behaviour change is the ultimate goal, that's a game-changer.

**Prompt:** What opportunities do you have to embed small, actionable nudges into your daily workflow and in a timely manner?



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## 4.1

## Principle 3: Create a Culture of Safety: Where Behaviour Change Thrives

Even the most well-designed interventions will falter without the right environment. After all, change rarely happens in isolation; it is a social process, shaped by the culture that surrounds us.

One essential ingredient is **psychological safety**. Popularised by Harvard professor Amy Edmondson, psychological safety is the belief that you won't be punished

or humiliated for taking risks, admitting mistakes, or asking for help <sup>7</sup>. When people feel safe, they're more willing to experiment and innovate with new behaviours. Without it, even the most timely and relevant interventions can hit a wall of resistance.

Cultivating a culture of safety is therefore critical to driving change. It encourages new behaviours by reframing failure as a

learning opportunity rather than a thing to be avoided. When this happens, the gap between knowing and doing begins to close.

But safety alone isn't enough. To sustain change, we need to focus on strengths.

Research from Gallup shows when people use their strengths every day, they are six times more likely to be engaged at work <sup>8</sup>.





This focus on what we already do well makes change stick. It feels more doable and within our control.

Much like the Super-Strengths approach used in high-performance sport <sup>9</sup>, when organisations leverage strengths to create change, confidence and momentum begin to grow. People stop asking, what am I doing wrong? And start asking, how can I do even better?

This approach isn't just a gimmick; it is a powerful enabler of change. It creates a culture which celebrates experimentation, leverages strengths, and offers support without judgement. And when that happens,

behaviour change becomes not just possible, but inevitable.

When organisations create a culture that celebrates experimentation, rewards strengths, and offers support without judgement, behaviour change becomes not just possible, but inevitable.

**Prompt:** How can you foster an environment where individuals feel safe to take risks and build confidence in using their strengths to drive change?

## 5.1

# Conclusion: Turning Knowing into Doing

The Knowing-Doing Gap isn't just a workplace challenge; it's a universal human problem. We all know things we could do to improve—exercise more, listen better, take more risks—but knowing and doing are worlds apart.

Bridging this gap requires more than good intentions. It demands deliberate action. By making change personal, delivering timely nudges, and cultivating a culture of safety, we create the conditions where change becomes not just possible, but probable.

Applying these principles requires a shift in mindset. Instead of viewing knowledge as sufficient for change, we must focus on enabling change through the environments we design and the behaviours we encourage.

So if you're serious about closing the Knowing-Doing Gap - whether for yourself or others - ask yourself: **What's the one thing I can do to make this change more likely to succeed?**

Whether it's tailoring an interaction, offering a timely nudge, or simply asking, what support do you need?—that first step matters.

Because knowledge isn't power—not on its own. Power comes from putting knowledge to use. And when we master the art of turning awareness into action, we begin to unlock the potential for meaningful, lasting change.



## 6.1 About This Paper

This White Paper was developed to help leaders, learning professionals, and organisations close the Knowing-Doing Gap. It draws on research from behavioural science, organisational psychology, and real-world examples of how change happens.

By applying these principles, you'll not only improve the impact of your learning initiatives—you'll create a workplace where action is a natural outcome of awareness. Because in the end, it's not what we know that changes the world. It's what we do.



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bridges the knowing doing gap with our  
groundbreaking psychometric platform, visit  
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