

EAST Method

Developed by the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT), this brainstorming technique that focuses on the impact presentation has on decision making.

WHAT IS BIT?

The world's first government institution to explore the intersection of behavioral science and public policy. The main tenants of the team's work are:

- Increasing cost effectiveness of public services,
- Making public services more accessible to the everyday resident,
- Using an understanding of human behavior to shape policy and improve outcomes, and
- Enabling residents to make better choices.

THE BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS TEAM ◆

THE EAST METHOD

This brainstorming method provides public policy makers simple way to apply proven behavioral science techniques to problem-solving. Using the EAST Method, unveils how we might present choices to the customer to influence the decisions they make.

Make it **EASY**

People tend to take the path of least resistance; in other words, make the decision based on the option that will require the least time or resource investment. The harder an option seems, the less likely a customer will select that option.

By making our preferred option easier, we increase the likelihood the customer will select it.

Ways to make it Easy:

- **Capitalize on Defaults:** Making the desired behavior the automatic option
- **Reduce the "Hassle Factor":** Limit the effort, or perceived effort, necessary to complete an action
- **Simplify the Message:** Keep communication jargon free and include step-by-step instructions



Example: Making the annual healthcare enrollment auto-renew to your previously selected plan, with an option to 'opt-out'.

Make it **ATTRACTIVE**

Private industry is an expert in marketing in a eye-catching, memorable way that makes us want to do, or buy their product. Government can adopt this way of communicating for public policy.

Ways to make it Attractive:

- **Be Loud:** Use color and images to draw people in.
- **Create Rewards/Sanctions:** Use financial incentives or lotteries to catalyze competition to complete desired behavior.
- **Make it Personal:** Using people's names makes it feel less like a generic communication and invokes that "what this means for me" appeal

Example: CPIO using a play on a popular video game. Call of Duty, to catch the attention of dog owners and encourage them to pick up pet waste.



Make it **SOCIAL**

Humans are deeply influenced by what their peers and colleagues do and say. A testimonial regarding a decision from someone with social capital automatically elevates the legitimacy and desirability of the decision.

Ways to make it Social:

- **Use the Power of Networks:** Use the value of community and connectivity to encourage a desired behavior.
- **Communicate the Norm:** Make it obvious what "most people" do (if it's the desired behavior)
- **Raise the Stakes:** Provide an opportunity for people to "lock" themselves into commitments to decrease the gap between intentions and actions.



Example: City of Fort Collins encourages neighborhoods to take part in Clean-Up Days, and offering an accessible list of public and private resources available to facilitate success.

Make it **TIMELY**

Individuals are more receptive to ideas and messages at certain times in their lives, than they are at others. Catching people in the right place, at the right time can be key to policy or initiative success.

Ways to make Timely:

- **Prompt People:** Context is just as important as timing in our behavior. Prompt the behavior you seek when its at the front of mind for the audience.
- **Communicate Immediate Costs/Benefits:** We have a “present bias” and are more influenced by the immediate impact of our decisions – rather than long-term effects. Now is tangible, the future is hypothetical.
- **Help people plan:** Identify when people are likely to set specific goals, and share how others have overcome barriers to that goal.

The screenshot shows a web-based calculator titled "Small Change, Big Savings" by ICMA RC. It features a header with the ICMA RC logo and two buttons: "Big Savings" and "What now?". Below the title is a sub-header: "Select how many of each item you could give up and then see how it all adds up!". The main area contains five categories of items, each with a visual icon and a counter set to 0:

- vending machine (ICMA RC logo)
- coffee cup
- beer and wine
- fast food (fries and burger)
- lottery tickets (labeled "ADMIT ONE")

Below these are two sliders for "LENGTH OF TIME" (set to 20 years) and "INVESTMENT RETURN" (set to 5%). On the right, a "TOTAL SAVINGS" section shows a large "\$0" and the text "By Saving: \$ 0 /month". A "NEXT" button is at the bottom right.

Example: City of Fort Collins onboarding process includes a focus on pre/post-tax retirement savings being automatically withdrawn from your paycheck. This is done during a time when people are already filling out paperwork and – often – have yet to receive their first paycheck and get accustomed to a certain biweekly amount.