Nudging for Change

Platform: Mighty Networks
Duration: Blended (13.5 hours live online Zoom session + self-learning)
Certification: Yes, you have to pay A$1500 (could be negotiated)

This course, *Nudging for Change*, introduced me to behavioural economics as a powerful and practical lens to understand the complex and often irrational decision-making of both farmers and extension personnel, especially when it comes to choosing technologies or forming opinions about farmers. Integrating behavioural science into extension education offers deeper insights into the psychological barriers to change, enabling the design of more effective and sustainable interventions.

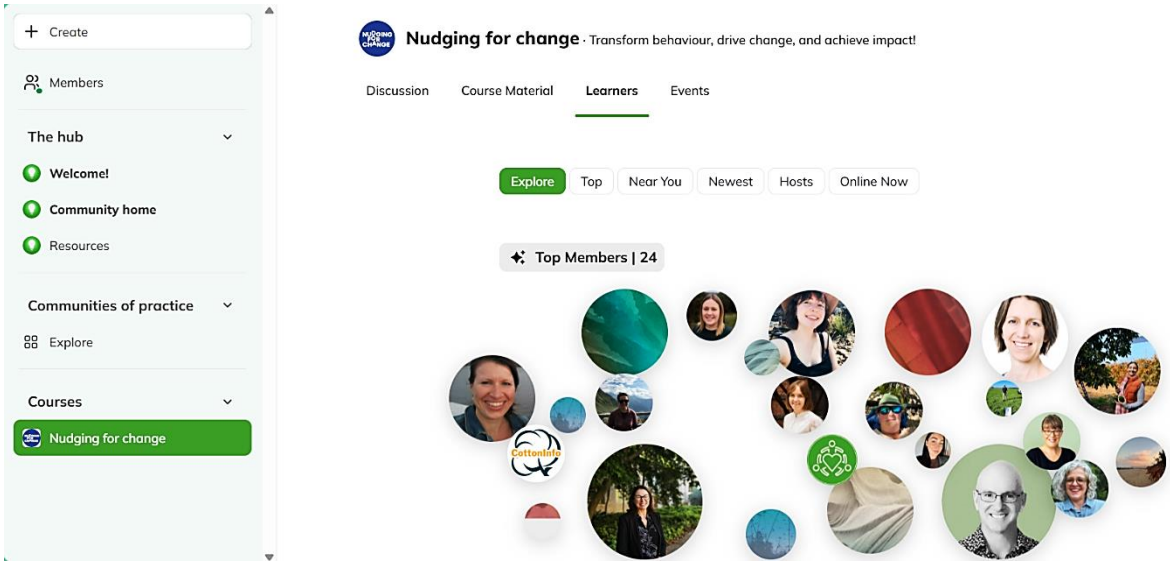
The course was created and hosted by *Enablers of Change*, a specialist consultancy based in Australia. It is led by two experienced instructors: Dr. John James, an Adjunct Associate Professor at The University of Queensland and an active member of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN), and James West, a behavioural economics consultant with over 15 years of global experience.

The course employed a flexible online learning approach, combining flipped learning, where participants reviewed materials in advance, with live group coaching sessions. Participants accessed modules at their own pace and joined Zoom sessions for deeper understanding and interaction. It was hosted on Mighty Network, which served as the main platform for discussions, resources, peer engagement, and ongoing networking.

The course was structured into nine modules, each building progressively on key behavioural science principles:

1. What is Behavioural Science?
2. Choosing a Behaviour to Change
3. Gathering Behavioural Data
4. Mapping the Barriers and Benefits
5. Behavioural Strategies: Reciprocity, Liking, and Authority
6. Behavioural Strategies: Social Proof, Commitment, and Scarcity
7. Communicating for Change
8. Evaluating Your Project
9. The Future of Behavioural Science

Each module began with a clear introduction to the core concepts, often supported by short videos. These included interviews with leading experts, explanatory videos, and real-world examples from the farming community, which illustrated how the concept applied to specific agricultural situations.



Each module of the course was supported by a live Zoom session. John facilitated these sessions, while James delivered the course content through engaging slide presentations. James shared evidence-based examples to demonstrate how behavioural economics concepts were applied to overcome challenges and drive measurable improvements.

To deepen understanding, James also introduced practical exercises that connected behavioural concepts to everyday decisions. For example, he used relatable scenarios to illustrate the concept of biases and barriers, helping participants grasp how these biases play out in real-life situations.

As part of each Zoom session, participants were divided into small breakout rooms (2–3 people) for about 12–15 minutes. These sessions, with guiding questions, encouraged us to reflect on the concepts, discuss their relevance to our own projects, and develop strategies tailored to our specific areas of work.

After the breakout sessions, we returned to the main group to share our strategies. James provided personalized feedback, offering suggestions and highlighting possible gaps or oversights. This iterative process helped clarify our planning and enhanced the practical value of the course content.

The course builds a strong understanding of the behavioural and psychological barriers that often slow down or limit the lasting adoption of new practices. These include intuitive biases, resistance to change, lack of trust, perceived complexity, and common judgment errors. Farmers may also feel overwhelmed by new systems, remain attached to traditional methods, or struggle to form habits around new technologies.

To address these challenges, the course introduces key behavioural science concepts such as social proof, loss aversion, mental accounting, sunk cost fallacy, optimism bias, anchoring, and the gap between stated and actual preferences. It also explores models like Fogg's Behaviour Model and principles such as motivated reasoning, availability bias, and choice fatigue to explain

decision-making in farming. Communication-related cognitive biases like change blindness, the Stroop effect, and the curse of knowledge are also discussed. Additionally, the course guides on selecting target behaviours and designing effective interventions using tools like Cialdini's six principles of persuasion and BJ Fogg's BMAP model.

Participants will learn how to plan, test, learn, and adapt behaviour change interventions using iterative, evidence-based approaches. Finally, the course explores the future of behavioural science in driving sustainable, scalable change in agriculture, equipping learners with the skills and mindset to lead innovation in the field.

Other than this, the course offered a well-rounded mix of readings, case studies, and multimedia resources for each module. Key readings included works by Daniel Kahneman, BJ Fogg, Robert Cialdini, and Malcolm Gladwell. Case studies highlighted behavioural strategies that improved irrigation, water conservation, soil health, and integrated farming practices. These were complemented by engaging videos and articles such as Tali Sharot's TED Talk on optimism bias, Kristen Berman's product teardowns, Adam Grant's insights on givers and takers, and interactive tools like the "invisible gorilla" and "curse of knowledge" experiments.

Before taking this course, my understanding of technology transfer was grounded in traditional teaching–learning models and adoption theories from my postgraduate studies. This course introduced me to behavioural science as a practical and insightful approach to understanding why technologies often fail to spread or sustain adoption. What initially seemed like simple behavioural tricks proved to be powerful tools for making extension efforts more effective and long-lasting.

The course offered a solid foundation for applying behavioural insights in agriculture, highlighting the gap between intention and action. It deepened my understanding of the subtle factors shaping adoption and stressed the importance of ethics and thoughtful, iterative application in extension work.

I would also recommend this course to extension professionals, private agricultural companies, consultants, and project managers, particularly those involved in technology dissemination, agricultural marketing, or behaviour change projects. The course offers valuable insights into how innovation is perceived, understood, and introduced to farmers. It also encourages us to reflect on our own biases when designing strategies for promoting and disseminating new technologies.

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