rare

CONTRACTING FOR GREEN ENERGY

Designing Behavior Change

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE OPPORTUNITY
We see opportunity to shift the norm for energy.

Recent studies show that consumers believe that the U.S. needs more renewable energy sources. However, relatively few Americans actually participate in the voluntary purchases of renewable energy.

This tells us several things: consumers aren't aware that their energy choices can spur the creation of new renewable energy sources, and that they are generally not thinking about where their energy comes from. It also tells us that the consumers who are aware of their ability to purchase renewable energy are not sure how to safely do so. To make matters worse, the window where consumers think about their energy options is small. After the initial choice of energy providers is made—if a choice exists at all—the matter of renewable energy is rarely top-of-mind.

How can we make consumers aware that they do have the option of purchasing renewable energy? For this journey, we considered consumer access to renewable energy as fulfilled through Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs).

" Consumers aren't choosing renewable energy because they don't get how it works and why it should be a part of their lives. Allowing every US household to choose a renewable energy provider is effectively settled through virtualization. Rare has an incredible opportunity to make consumers feel motivated and empowered, and in so doing, spur demand for renewable energy."

– **Travis Niles**
Energy & Transportation Marketing Manager, Rare's US Climate Change program

# Changing this behavior requires shifting beliefs.

Changing behavior is rarely easy. However, behavior science provides insights on what levers best drive behavior change. What a person believes about a behavior is critical. And an important lever for changing that belief is the social influence from key relationships.

A particular personal internal belief and the related external social influence is what we call a psycho-social state. For any behavior, if select psycho-social states are shifted, the likelihood of behavior change increases.

For example, that is to say, if others in your reference network—people whose beliefs and opinions you care about—believe a behavior is important or good, you begin to believe it too, and you're then much more likely to engage in that behavior.

Psycho-social states are the beliefs to change.

To drive behavior change, Rare brings together essential disciplines. First, behavioral science uncovers the key psycho-social states required for the change. Second, service design works with behavior science, marketing, and additional experts to develop interventions capable of shifting the psycho-social states and driving the behavior change.
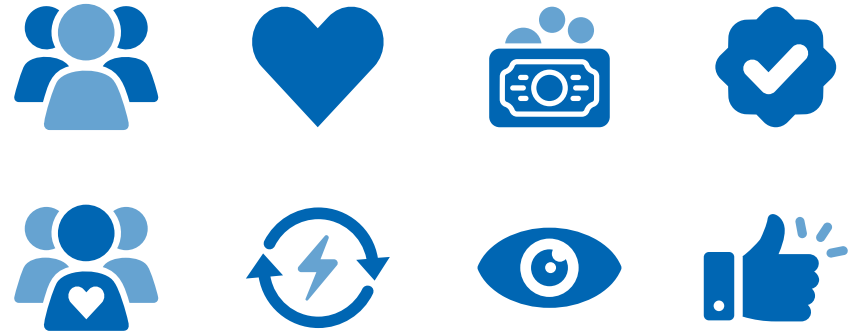
THE APPROACH

Identify, prototype, and test the way to shift psycho-social states.

The first step to identifying the psycho-social states is to analyze existing research, looking for factors that evidence suggests will drive behavior change.

These factors are formatted in the following form: "If _____, then I will be more likely to choose renewable energy." These statements are affinitized and analyzed by behavioral scientists to yield the psycho-social states contributing to behavior change.

Renewable Energy Psycho-social States

These are the psycho-social states to shift.

Empirical Expectations:
I believe that those in my reference network are buying renewable energy.

Normative Expectations:
I believe that those in my reference network think I should buy renewable energy because it is the right thing to do.

Personal Normative Beliefs:
I believe that people should buy renewable energy because it is the right thing to do.

Saliency:
Renewable energy is a relevant part of my decision context.

Material Costs:
I believe that I can afford to buy renewable energy.

Observability:
I believe that others will find out if I purchase renewable energy.

Trust:
I believe that renewable energy has the impact it represents to have.

Ease:
Adoption requires minimal effort.

Ideating and prototyping interventions

The psycho-social states are reframed as opportunities for interventions. For example, "How might we affect the belief that those in my reference network are buying renewable energy?"

Guided by these opportunity framings, multidisciplinary teams do rapid sketching to generate intervention concepts for each psycho-social state. The initial concepts can be shared, examined through the lenses of multiple fields of expertise, and improved through interdisciplinary collaboration.

The strongest concepts that will yield the most learning are developed into prototypes to be tested with research participants. The participants are invited to respond to the ideas, and give their thoughts, feelings and ideas for improvement.

Conducting field research

For our research sessions sixteen people were recruited to participate in a ninety minute research session. They represented a range of ethnic backgrounds, income levels and regions of the United States.

Each session included an interview and an exercise to help the team understand the research participant's beliefs and attitudes related to energy and climate change, both independently and in how they may intersect. Then the participant was shown the intervention concept prototypes and asked a series of questions: How likely would they be to engage with the concept, and why? What would make them more or less likely to engage? How would engaging with the concept affect other people's opinions of them? What would they think of other people who engaged? For the most compelling concept, participants were to talk about the location and timing of the concept, to learn more about contexts where the intervention might be most effective.

What We Learned

The research provided insights into how to communicate about Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs).

We began by introducing participants to the idea of using green energy or renewable energy at home, and later in the session introduced the concept of RECs.

While the benefits of purchasing RECs were appreciated by most research participants, the mechanisms for realizing those benefits were not only confusing—they jeopardized the behavior change by arousing suspicions. Between facile misunderstanding of how RECs work to deliver their benefits and an accurate understanding of how the energy grid works is a stretch of extremely uncomfortable reconception where an actor is extremely likely to abandon this possible new behavior.
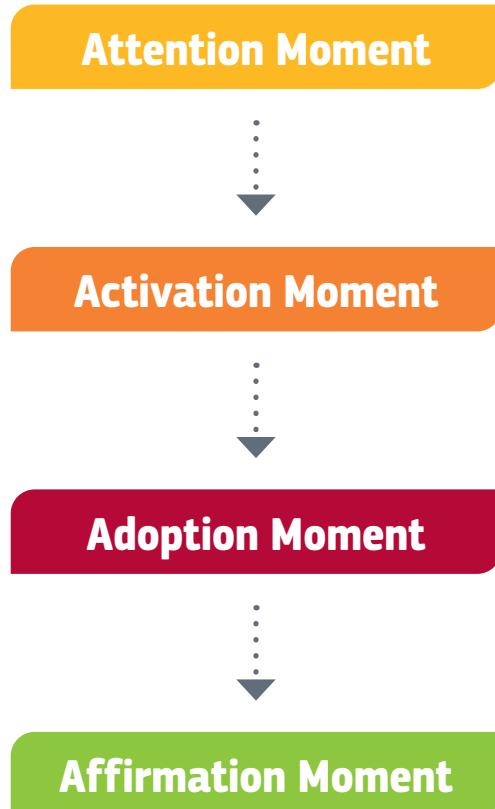
We found that emphasis and pacing are essential to success. Early in the change, the benefits of renewable energy paired with the ease of making the switch should be emphasized. Pacing the information—avoiding information overload—is necessary to avoid raising doubts too early in the process, but must be done in such a way that the actor is confident that answers are not being withheld should they wish to learn more. Later, after the behavior is adopted, the emphasis should switch to the real impacts of the actor's choice, and opportunities to persuade others to switch should become the focus.

" I don't care how [renewable energy] works—I'll let the experts figure it out."

– Nick

" You should be able to have a choice no matter how big or small it is. If we have 20 flavors or Oreos, why can't we have energy choice?"

– Warren

The Behavior Change Moments

Attention Moment

Activation Moment

Adoption Moment

Affirmation Moment

The process of behavior change can be viewed as a journey, divided up into different moments. The person going through the journey, known as an actor, may experience only some of these moments.

Each moment of the journey represents a design challenge: giving the actor a reason to engage while also positively affecting their psycho-social state.

It's possible to engage the actor in the journey if they are willing to invest a certain amount of time, effort, money or social capital to get something of value in return: information, progress toward some goal, emotional gratification, a feeling of connection, etc. A successful intervention must meet these functional and emotional needs, while also shifting their psycho-social states.

Of course, these moments are only a small part of the actor's life, and they only influence behavior, not determine it. But the goal is to address the needs of the moment as effectively as possible in order to effect maximum change.

The challenge of each moment is summarized to help shape the design of interventions that support the goals of the moment.

Attention Moment

In the Attention moment, our actor notices information related to renewable energy, perceives it as relevant—most of all that it is even an available option!—and is led to a belief that renewable energy is worth looking into as an option.

In this moment it is important to localize the messaging so the actor knows this option is relevant to them, and to establish the value of adopting renewable energy.

• • • • • • • • • • ▶

Activation Moment

In the Activation moment, our actor seriously considers shifting to renewable energy and spends more time understanding and conceptualizing the shift to renewable energy. Once our actor feels trust and resonance, they are convinced shifting or switching to renewable energy is the right thing to do.

In this moment it is important to remove perceived obstacles that might prevent the actor from signing up.

Adoption Moment

In the Adoption moment, our actor switches to renewable energy. After living with using renewable energy, the protagonist is happy with their decision to switch and is motivated to communicate the benefits of renewable energy and to integrate it into their social identity.

In this moment it is important to reinforce the actor's decision by showing the positive impact of their choice.

· · · · · · · · · · ▶

Affirmation Moment

In the Affirmation moment, our actor signals use and approval of renewable energy to reference network, which is noticed by members of reference network, who see the behavior as admirable and normal.

In this moment it is important to make the actor feel sufficiently confident in the value of renewable energy that they are eager to persuade others to follow their example.

Developing Interventions and Journeys

Guided by the insights from the research, the behavior change interventions are revisited. Intervention concepts that test well are retained or used to inspire improved versions. Often, the research inspires new intervention concepts that address considerations learned in interviews.

The new set of interventions is sequenced across the four behavior change moments, and then connected together and developed into a continuous designed experience, expressed as a story from the future.

Of course, when the interventions are developed, released and experienced by real people, each experience will be different. They might experience only some of the interventions, and they might experience them in a slightly different order. The story from the future is intended to illustrate an ideal typical experience where an actor interacts with all the interventions, to make it easier to understand how the interacting with the interventions across the moments comes together as a single experience.

"We went into this journey fully aware that energy is an intangible thing. We also assumed that it is generally a private, personal choice for a household, one that most people today would balk at sharing publicly for a variety of reasons ranging from privacy to comprehension to sheer indifference. These considerations presented juicy design challenges for our journey development."

— **Travis Niles**
   Energy & Transportation Marketing Manager, Rare's US Climate Change program

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A journey of adopting and promoting renewable energy.

To bring about behavior change, it ultimately has to work in the context of people's lives. Therefore, it's useful to imagine what these moments and psycho-social shifts look like from the perspective of an actor.

On the following pages is "a story from the future" which illustrates the behavior change journey we have envisioned. In this story we will follow our protagonist, Alex, as he moves through each of behavior change moments, at each step becoming more committed to using renewable energy in his home and promoting adoption of renewable energy in his community.

Individual Journey

Before Alex ever became aware that renewable energy was available in their area, an energy ambassador was hanging signs around their neighborhood and talking with neighbors about signing up for renewable energy.

Psycho-social states: Empirical Expectations, Normative Expectations, Saliency, Observability

Alex sees a sticker on the window of an apartment in their community, which reads: "This home uses renewable energy."

Psycho-social states: Empirical Expectations, Normative Expectations, Saliency, Observability

Individual Journey
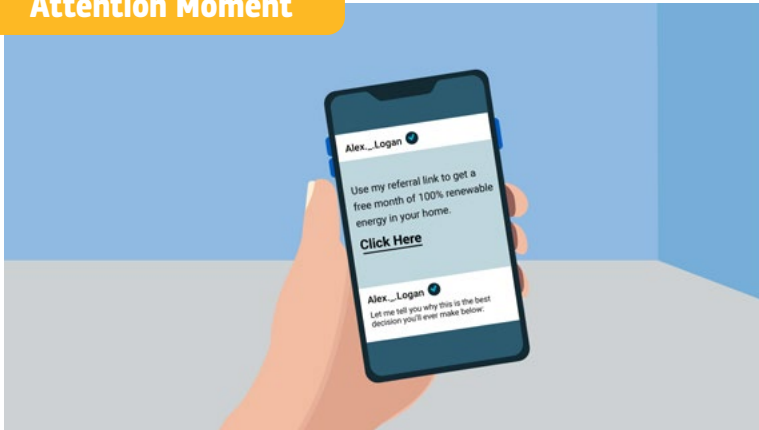
Attention Moment

Later, Alex notices other neighbors are positing on social media showing the positive impact of renewable energy adoption in their area, and communicating the value of using renewable energy.

Attention Moment

Alex strikes up a conversation with a neighbor, and ask for the neighbor's opinion, which the neighbor happily shares.

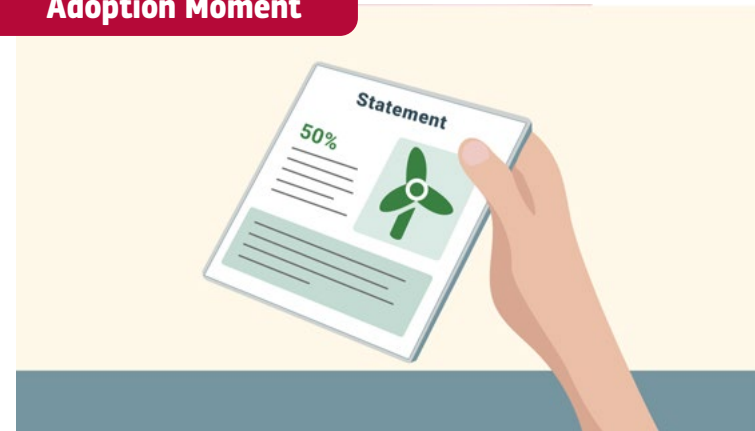**Psycho-social states:** Empirical Expectations, Normative Expectations, Saliency, Observability

Psycho-social states: Empirical Expectations, Normative Expectations, Saliency, Observability

Individual Journey
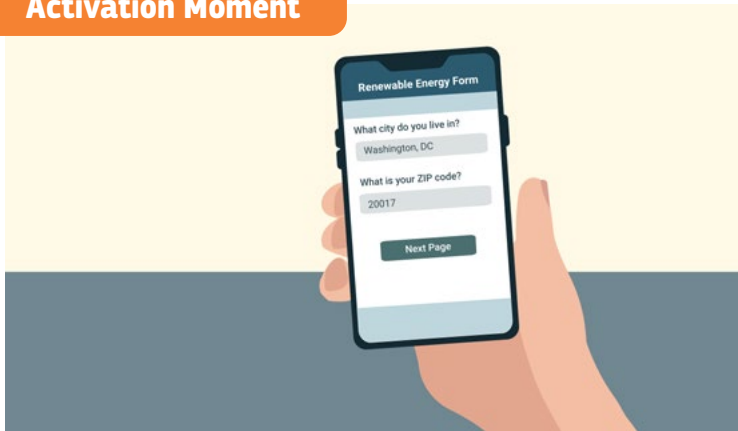
Alex enters their address and is able to understand an estimate of how much their upgrade will cost; the value exchange feels fair and unthreatening.

Psycho-social states: Saliency, Material Costs, Ease

Each subsequent statement shows the project they're supporting, and quantifies and contextualizes their clean energy impact that month.

Psycho-social states: Personal Normative Beliefs, Material Costs, Trust, Ease

Individual Journey

Two months later a Rare communication shows the number of households in their zip code also using renewable energy, urge them to share.

Alex shares a social media post highlighting his community's impact. There is a call to action on the post, and anyone who signs up gets a free month (and gets Alex a free month, too).

Psycho-social states: Empirical Expectations, Normative Expectations, Personal Normative Beliefs, Saliency, Observability, Trust

Psycho-social states: Empirical Expectations, Normative Expectations, Personal Normative Beliefs, Saliency, Observability, Trust

Individual Journey

Affirmation Moment
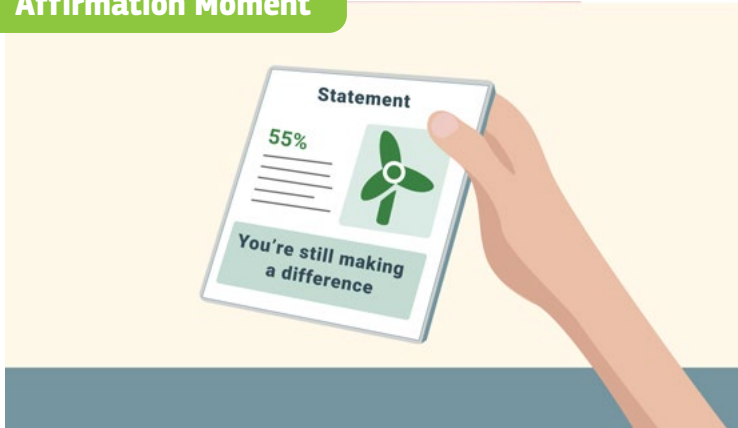
Alex receives regular statements from the energy service provider. After a period of days of no wind/long darkness in the winter, Alex gets a note reminding them that their renewable energy is still working

Psycho-social states: Empirical Expectations, Normative Expectations, Personal Normative Beliefs, Saliency, Observability, Trust

Blueprinting the Journey

A key part of the process of developing the sequenced interventions into a story from the future is blueprinting the experience delivery. This method is adapted from one of the core tools of service design, service blueprinting.

In the experience delivery blueprint, the question is asked: how, concretely, will this experience be actualized, both frontstage, where things are experienced directly by the main actor (whose behavior we wish to change), and backstage where the experience is supported behind the scenes.

The frontstage of the experience includes touchpoints encountered by and interacted with the main actor, as well as other people who interact with the actor and help shape the experience.

The backstage includes all the actions, processes, policies, technologies, etc. that support the experience behind the scenes.

Creating an experience delivery blueprint places the story under a microscope and allows the team to think carefully about the practicalities of the experience. How likely is it to work as intended? And what organizational capabilities are required to make the experience happen as envisioned.

What's Next?

The behavior change journey is now in its first iteration. The capabilities identified in the experience delivery blueprints are being mapped to existing solutions, developed to bring about change. And so most importantly, Rare is interested in connecting with people and organizations who see themselves as part of the solution to bring about behavior change.

Drop us a note at
mip@rare.org

Follow and message
us on social media at
@rare_org

These are just some of the reasons to connect with us.

- You see your capabilities and solutions as a part of the journey

- You're already working in this space and want to bring behavior change design to your work

- You have some questions or feedback on this book

- You want to get involved or just follow along

Thanks

Rare inspires change so people and nature thrive.

Rare is an international non-profit organization specializing in social change for people and the planet. With a people-centered approach rooted in behavioral science and design thinking, Rare has inspired and empowered millions of people in over 60 countries around the world to shift their behaviors and practices so both people and nature thrive. Now, Rare seeks to inspire people to take actions that have the greatest potential for measurably moving the meter on climate change right now.

rare.org | @rare_org