

# INCLUSION ROUTINES

Rather than facing a revolution, you're facing something that can be likened to evolution. Changing behaviors takes time. But how long? The answer varies between individuals and context as well as the behavior in question. Research, Oriental teaching, psychologists, and authors of self-help books have often found that it takes between 20 and 30 days to change a habit. But there's no magic number. There's no real evidence of any number at all. Our common sense tells us that based on the experience of all those broken New Year's resolutions we know how difficult it is to break old habits or create new ones.

The advantage of behavioral design – which you read about in section 4 – is that it helps you find ways to formalize new habits and accelerate that process. When it comes to the inclusion of diversity, you can use behavioral design to bridge the gap between knowing that it is important and acting on it. When you know what you want to achieve, i.e., what you need and when you need it, you can design inclusion routines to also act on it.

**Inclusion routines are behavioral design adapted to make it easier to respect, include, and benefit from the amazing diversity of perspectives, personalities, skills, and experiences that already exist in a group, throughout the organization, or perhaps even outside it. Applied in specific situations, forums or decisions, these routines will increase your ability to collaborate, your capacity for continuous renewal, and improve the accuracy of your work.**

The point is to make inclusion routines so easy to implement that they become habits. Therefore, they should be designed with the brain's system 1 in mind. You should not need to have to think about what to do. You should get a clear instruction about what should be done – and do it quite simply because it has become the way you work.

You are the experts on your working methods. You know when you perform well, and you know when you reach or exceed your targets. You know your context and your colleagues, partners, customers, and other stakeholders. This knowledge, along with a quick guide on how to create sound inclusion routines will enable you to design your own solutions that help you include the diversity of perspectives that you want (and need) in your workday.

To give you an idea of where you are headed, I want to cite an example of behavioral design that attracted a lot of attention for its clear results – but also because it's quite fun: Staff at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam grew tired of the poor aim of people using the urinals. So they tested putting a sticker of a fly in the urinals. The concentration required to attempt to hit the “fly” resulted in a reduction of urine splash by up to 80 per cent! The fly in this example reminds people who are desperate to go – at the exact moment when they have a choice – to keep themselves inside the urinal. Entirely in line with the principle of not restricting choice, the urinals could remain, and regardless of the preferences of individual toilet users, the design makes it easy to do the right thing.

The Schiphol initiative attracted a great deal of attention and someone who was fascinated by the solution was economic professor and now Nobel Prize winner, Richard Thaler. Together with his colleague Cass Sunstein, Thaler wrote *Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness* in which the expression behavioral design was used for the first time in a behavioral economic context.

## REMINDE YOURSELVES TO APPLY YOUR ROUTINES

Suppose you want to have time to yourself, a chance to catch your breath, a little more often. So you make a point of doing so every time you brush your teeth. On the one hand, this routine makes it easier to remember to take these moments. And on the other, it increases the likelihood of you actually taking those moments. The same applies to a good inclusion routine. It might be about adding an extra recurring point when you go through the agenda of a meeting. Or that when you appoint a project group, you always ask everyone in your department if they want to join, instead of just asking “the usual suspects” or the people you already know. If certain critical steps are carried out in special meeting rooms or on a specific digital tool, this may be where you need to adjust something.



Just like in the example of the “fly” in the urinals, you need to be reminded to act differently and thus reduce the friction that comes from applying the (new) routine. **When designing an inclusion routine, therefore, link it to something you do or use often.** This might be a checklist, a post-it note on a wall, or a little symbol in the canteen or meeting room. Or a pop-up box in a digital platform, a talking stick that reminds you to take turns to lead certain meetings. It could be that you always conduct certain meetings on a certain platform or in a certain venue to trigger what you need.

Therefore, your routine should help you to behave in a way that includes diversity in a situation that is important to you. As this is about increasing the frequency of a certain behavior in a specific situation, it is good if you can control if and in that case how often you act according to plan. If the behaviors you want to get out of the routine are absent or displayed too rarely, well, then you need to find out why.

## MEASURING OUTCOMES OF INCLUSION ROUTINES

**To measure the outcomes of your routine, you need to be able to measure the behavior it is supposed to encourage. It must therefore be possible to observe the behavior, and in order to make it possible to count the number of times it is presented – it must be specific.**

A rule of thumb is that it should be possible to capture the behavior on film. You see someone do something or hear someone say something – or you do not. Someone maintains eye contact with everyone in the group or only looks at one person. Regardless of who is speaking, the meeting leader nods in confirmation or confirmation looks different for different people. You invite the people you need to the meeting or you do not. Everyone at the meeting is asked about their ideas or just a few people are. You get the picture.

Behavior is also about activity. In psychology, the way to determine if something is a behavior or not is called the dead man's test, because nothing a dead person can do is active enough. This means that what we do not do or say can never be a behavior. To avoid greeting someone or avoid being late for a meeting is therefore not a behavior.

The behaviors you want to encourage with your inclusion routine must therefore be both specific and active. If greeting everyone in the office is a behavior that you want to encourage, it should therefore be formulated as “saying hello to all colleagues in team X when we come to the office”. If being on time for meetings is a desired behavior, it needs to be formulated as “arriving at Monday's group meeting at least two minutes before the scheduled start time”. The more precise you are in your formulations, the easier it will be to measure your results.

A test of whether you are precise enough can be made if two people observe the behavior in question. If they both agree that they can observe it, that it is active, and of course what specific behavior it is, and can measure how many times it is exhibited – then you're on track.

# REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES: INCLUSION ROUTINES

At the end of the workshops I facilitate, I make time for participants to identify simple solutions that require limited resources and that can be implemented almost immediately. Over the years, my colleagues and I have heard the most fantastic inclusion routines – some are absolutely brilliant in their simplicity. Here are some favourites that you can copy and paste if you don't come up with any of your own during the concluding workshop, or you can use them as inspiration to create variants that suit you.



## THE "I DON'T AGREE" ROUTINE

Start each meeting by appointing a devil's advocate. Their task is to challenge and question decisions, ideas, and analyses by taking a different position to accepted norms. Alternate who does this.

**Effect:** making "awkward" part of your approach helps teams to review their thoughts and decisions. It also means that nobody is reluctant to oppose a proposal or express disapproval – it's the job after all. In addition, the routine helps to define a new normal where a team becomes accustomed to challenging existing beliefs and ways of thinking.



## THE PERSPECTIVE SWAP ROUTINE

Let the newest group member, the youngest in the group, or someone with specialist knowledge who doesn't usually say very much, express their opinion first when making decisions and generating ideas. Make sure the person is prepared for what will be discussed.

**Effect:** this routine creates space for people who don't usually make their voices heard. If they can add new perspectives on how the team should approach a particular task, topic, or decision, others in the team are challenged to be open-minded, question current methods or processes, and promote open and cross-hierarchical communication. This routine also improves the self-confidence of young or new colleagues and creates greater willingness to take risks.



### WILDCARDS

Include a different perspective to the one you currently have in your team by inviting colleagues who represent a fresh approach to your meetings, (remember the magical percentage?). Ideally, these people should not be involved in working on the project your team is working on or making decisions related to it. They're there to contribute with their experience, ideas, and inspiration.

**Effect:** wildcards promote out-of-the-box thinking and can help you find new and innovative approaches. They also prevent you from getting stuck in silos, specialist areas, or similar.



### THE EMPTY CHAIR

Put an empty chair in the room when you take decisions or brainstorm ideas. Let the chair serve as a reminder that you don't know everything and that it may be that you lack perspectives that would have been valuable in terms of the specific issue you are discussing.

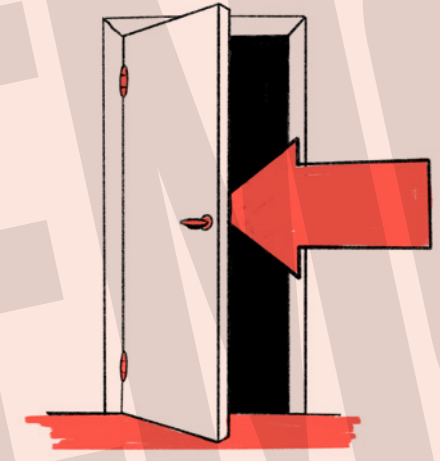
**Effect:** this routine forces you to examine which perspectives you lack and take them into account. And perhaps invite people with those perspectives to your next meeting.



### THE WORLD MAP

Hang up a world map in your office. When you talk to a colleague from a geographical region other than your own, mark that region with a pin on the map.

**Effect:** the map serves as a reminder to actively seek perspectives from geographical regions other than your own. This also helps you identify where you lack perspectives and where you may not be as engaged as often as you should be.



### CHECK-INS

Make a habit of starting weekly meetings with a team check-in. This means that each member of the team can say a few words about what they are thinking about and therefore need to put aside to be fully "present" in the meeting. Thoughts can be about people's private or professional lives.

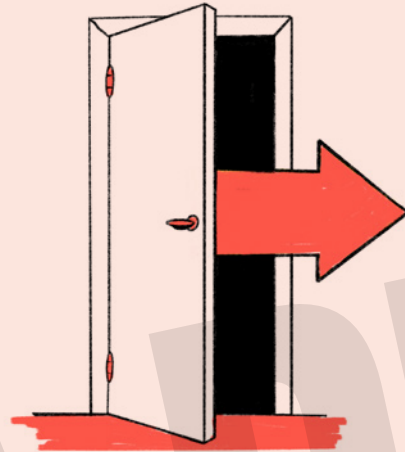
**Effect:** this routine makes it possible for all of you to be present and to be seen and heard. Check-in creates presence, focus, and group engagement. As you all gradually find out more about your colleagues' lives and work situations, empathy and understanding within the group grows.



### COLLECTIVE REFLECTION

Instead of bringing up a problem and running the risk of someone immediately shouting out their suggested solution, let everyone in the group think about the problem and write down their thoughts on paper in silence. Then each person can read out exactly what they have written down, without being interrupted. Lastly, the moderator summarizes what the group as a whole has said.

**Effect:** this simple technique gives everyone the opportunity to think without being influenced by the first person to speak and captures opinions that risk being pushed aside because someone feels uncomfortable about disagreeing with what has already been said. What's more, this routine allows introverted thinkers to share their ideas and perspectives inclusively.



### CHECK-OUTS

Make a habit of ending important meetings with a team check-out. Have everyone in the team share something they can check out with, either in turn around the table or at random. It can be a feeling, a reflection, their most important takeaway from the meeting, something that stood out or similar.

**Effect:** Check-out emphasizes reflection and is a symbolic and unifying way to round off a meeting. It also lets the team know what the discussions and decisions have meant to each participant.



### THE WRITE/VOTE ROUTINE

To get around the problem that people tend to value consensus within a team more than well-grounded decisions, use the following routine in important decision-making meetings:

1. All participants are given five minutes to write down their ideas relating to the decision on paper, and in silence.
2. Everyone gets a further two minutes to select one or two ideas from their lists.
3. Everyone shares these ideas on a board without feedback.
4. Everyone is given five minutes to reflect on all ideas presented and vote on the one they like the most. Their choice is written on a piece of paper, which serves as their vote.
5. Votes are counted. Those who wish to do so can provide a brief explanation about why they chose the idea they did, but nobody is allowed to change their vote.
6. The project leader – not the group – decides which idea is selected. Their decision does not have to be the same as the idea that won most votes from group members.

**Effect:** the fact that you brainstorm ideas and vote in silence reduces the risk of people being affected by each other's opinions. The project manager has the final mandate to make decisions but has been given the opportunity to be influenced by all project participants.



### THE "VANISHING OPTIONS" TEST

The decision-making process can sometimes be characterized by impatience, which means that you risk missing out on solutions that could lead to even better decisions. Therefore, use a mental trick based on asking the question: *If we did not choose one of the options we are currently considering, what would we do then?* Do it through collective reflection (see far left of this page).

**Effect:** this routine means that you take the time to investigate more alternative solutions. For example, if you want to expand your business to a new region, it could sound like this: "What would happen if we could not invest in region X? Where would we put our resources then?" It may make you consider investing in another region, or perhaps make improvements to your current location. The most important thing is that you get the opportunity to raise alternatives that otherwise would not have been mentioned.