



Six Proven Levers for Behavior Change to Prevent Plastic Marine Debris

Traditional Levers



Material Incentives ("pay them")

Increase or decrease the cost, time, or effort for a behavior.



Rules and Regulation ("stop them")

Enact rules that promote or restrict a behavior.



Information ("tell them")

Explain the desired behavior and why it matters.

Levers from Behavioral Insights



Emotional Appeals: *Use emotional messages to drive behavior.*

Personalize messages to be relevant and relatable, or utilize specific emotions for tailored outcomes and contexts. For example, [Project Cane Changer's](#) campaigns in Australia position farmers as guardians of the Great Barrier Reef, creating a sense of positive commitment among sugar cane farmers to reduce fertilizer runoff.



Social Influences: *Leverage the behavior, beliefs, and expectations of others.*

Make your target behaviors (more) observable to become the perceived norm, or eliminate excuses for not engaging. For example, making others' [electricity](#) or [water](#) use observable and comparable has been particularly effective at reducing excess and aligning behaviors with targets.



Choice Architecture: *Change the context in which choices are made.*

Redirect the decision-maker's attention during a decision by simplifying and reframing messaging and choices, using timely reminders and prompts, or facilitating decision-makers' planning and goal setting relative to a target behavior. For example, framing a [plastic bag tax](#) as 'paying' versus 'avoiding' a fee was more effective in encouraging shoppers to utilize reusable bags in place of plastic.

Led by Ocean Conservancy, Resilient Cities Network and The Circulate Initiative, the Urban Ocean program engages cities in the fight for clean, healthy seas. The platform works with leaders from city governments, academia, civil society and the private sector to develop best practices for embedding the reduction of plastic waste into other core city priorities like public health, economic growth and job creation.

This document was created in collaboration with Rare. For more information on how to select and apply the levers that are right for you, visit behavior.rare.org.

