

# Sustainable Work Habits: **The Unrealized Power of Prompts**

In an era of constant change and self-improvement, we find ourselves inundated with resources designed to enhance our personal and professional lives. However, behind these recommendations lies a century's worth of behavioral science research.



## The Modern Age of Self-improvement

While books on self-improvement have been a staple for years, the contemporary reader is looking to create habits not only to improve life, but also drive radical sustainability.

### Developing New Habits: What's the secret sauce?

Experts, influencers, and critics constantly offer up unique ways to cultivate new habits. However, behind their recommendations lies a century's worth of behavioral science research. A common thread in this research is the connection between habit formation and cues that prompt us to engage in the "right" behavior, but it's not just about the cue. **A habit is more than a one-time act; it's about consistent, positive outcomes.** We need to experience these positive results while avoiding unfavorable ones. Laying out your workout clothes the night before is one cue to get up and jog in the morning, which triggers endorphin release and a runner's high. Here, you have the prompt, the behavior, and the positive outcome that can lead to a lasting habit.

**However, life is rarely  
that straightforward.** →



At any moment, **we encounter prompts supporting desirable behavior and competing prompts advocating alternative actions**. The sight of your partner snoozing comfortably as you reach for your running shoes may tempt you back into bed. The outcome of a behavior also varies, as a morning run can lead to sore muscles or even an injury. Short-term endorphins may not be motivation enough when the weather gets colder. **Before a behavior becomes a habit, its prompts and outcomes often clash, causing unpredictability.**

## **Developing New Habits at Work: A Tricky Business**

This challenge extends from our personal lives to our professional ones. Modern work environments are characterized by multiple simultaneous transitions, making it a real struggle to abandon old habits in favor of new ones. We employ various strategies – reorganizations, training, communication, role changes, and other informational cues – to support change efforts. Yet, **people often revert to their old ways of working.**

Several factors contribute to this backslide. Employees may face a barrage of transitions, making it difficult to prioritize. The outcomes of new behaviors may not be rewarding enough to outweigh old habits.

## **Setting Up Prompts: The Art of Simplicity**

**Effective prompts, when properly set up, can initiate behavior change and sustain it until it becomes a habit.** Organizations are often excellent at creating prompts, but they may not realize which ones truly support the establishment of new habits. The internet is partly to blame, as it offers a multitude of tools, best practices, and expert advice, leading to information overload for employees.

**This information deluge can create significant resistance to change. →**



# Understanding Prompts: Keeping the Momentum



To simplify prompts and guide employees effectively, understanding these prompts within the context of the workplace is crucial. Here are some steps and questions to get you started:

## Step 1 – Define the Desired Behaviors

- ▶ Did we clearly define how new ways of working will look in daily interactions?
- ▶ How do the new ways of working compare to the old?
- ▶ Which current behaviors are inconsistent with the new approach?

## Step 2 – Evaluate the Prompts

- ▶ What prompts support old ways of working? How can we lessen their impact?
- ▶ Which prompts back the new approach?
- ▶ Are there prompts which fail to influence desired behaviors, and can we assess their value?
- ▶ If we could only invest in the most powerful prompts, which would we prioritize?

To view prompts from an employee perspective, categorize them into:

- **Culture:** rules, processes, expectations, values, leader behaviors, emotions
- **Communication:** signs, posters, emails, feedback, job aids
- **Organizational structure:** roles, job descriptions, hierarchies
- **Motivation:** goals, barrier removal
- **Process**
- **Equipment**

## Step 3 – Know What Matters

- ▶ What's the primary prompt? Which stands out as most positive and effective?
- ▶ Are you leveraging prompts in the categories above when/where they matter most?
- ▶ How can you invest in/promote the prompts that drive desired behaviors?

## Step 4 – Remove Barriers

- ▶ During transitions, how can you revisit these four steps and eliminate barriers?
- ▶ During culture changes, how can you differentiate between influential prompts and noise?

Understanding prompts within the workplace can lead to long-lasting habits which drive change and accelerate business results. In a world of constant transition, simplifying prompts can be the key to success.

For further information, or if you want to talk to an expert who can guide you through this journey, contact us today.

**Let's work together to unlock sustainable habits and accelerate your business results.**



## Meet ALULA



ALULA is a management consultancy that helps organizations and the people that fuel them achieve their full potential by unlocking the right behaviors and uplifting performance.

We believe that the most important asset of any organization is its people. When people are engaged, motivated, and working towards common goals, they can achieve great things. But too often, organizations are held back by outdated behaviors and mindsets.

That's where ALULA comes in. We help organizations unlock the critical few behaviors that have the biggest impact on achieving results. We do this by working with leaders and teams to identify the behaviors that need to change, and then developing and implementing a plan to make those changes stick.

We believe that when people are working at their best, they can do amazing things. And we're here to help make that happen.

Learn more at [alula.clg.com](https://alula.clg.com)

