ME, WE, TOOLS & RULES
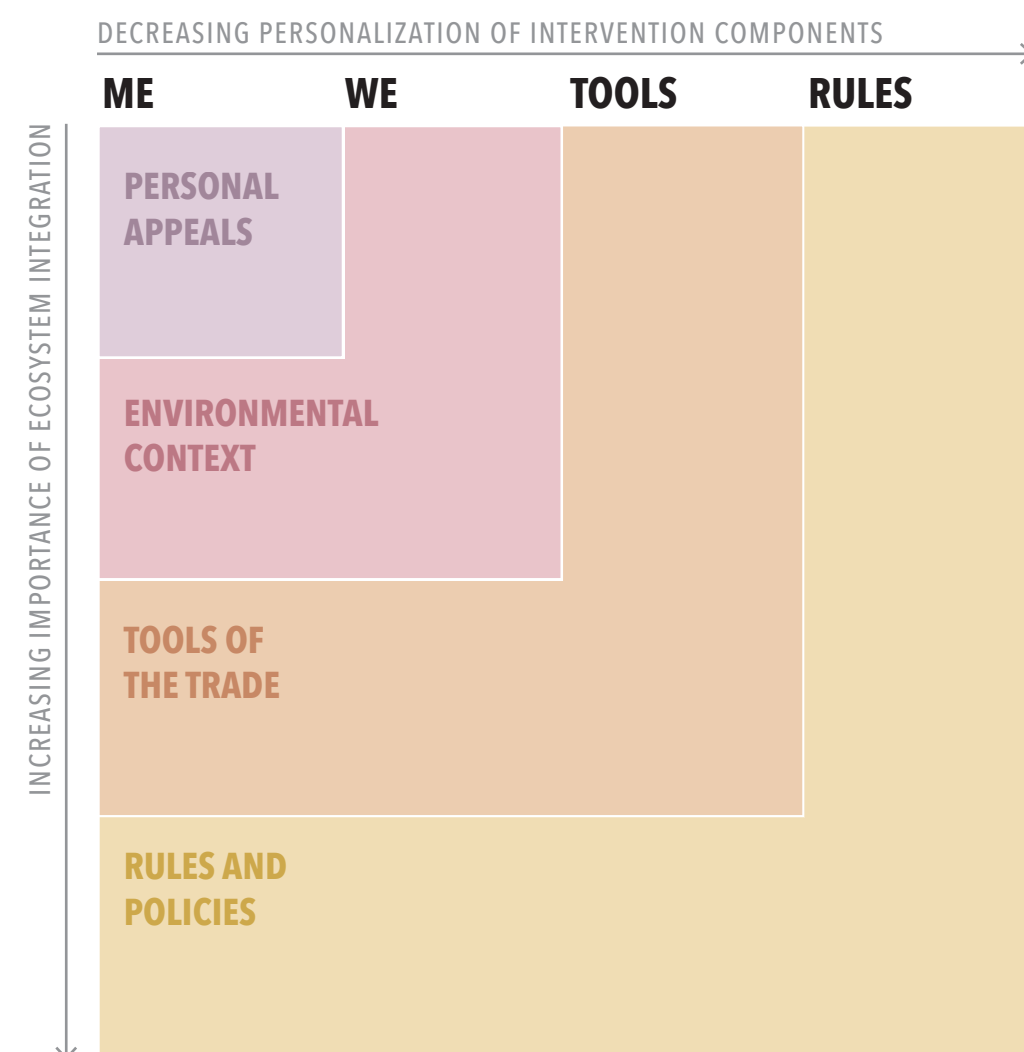
This behavioral design framework can help us diagnose the current state and nature of behaviorally-informed interventions, and can also be used as a generative device to **build more effective solutions.**

Designing with behavior in mind requires considering a full array of strategies and tactics. These can take different forms, such as:

- Messages, to help frame choices for people
- Physical environments or social norms
- Cues embedded in the mechanics of devices
- Policies or rules that structure incentives for action

Focusing on *all* these aspects within an interaction, in combination—including, but not limited to "nudges"—helps us design for more dimensions of behavior and decision-making.

DECREASING PERSONALIZATION OF INTERVENTION COMPONENTS

ME	WE	TOOLS	RULES

INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF ECOSYSTEM INTEGRATION

PERSONAL APPEALS

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

RULES AND POLICIES

PERSONAL APPEALS

MESSAGING AND IDENTITY

Sometimes our behavior is affected by simply getting information or messages that are directed to us directly, even if the message is not personalized. This can be especially powerful when it taps into our sense of identity or kinship, wanting to be the kind of person who acts a certain way.

Robert Cialdini's research on towel reuse indicated that If people were told others in their hotel were reusing towels to save on water and washing resources, about 26% did. When they were told *others who had previously stayed in the room* had done so, 34% did.

This "social proof" strategy has also been shown to be effective in getting out the vote and decreasing energy usage: providing "proof" that other people are doing desired behaviors can nudge people to act similarly... the tighter the "lasso," the more people are likely to do the right thing.

The PSA **Don't Mess with Texas** reduced littering in 1986: Research compiled by Daniel B. Syrek, a Californian who specialized in measuring trash, indicated that young men between the ages of 16 and 24 were the major perpetrators. **When Syrek counted Texas trash one year later, he found a 29 percent reduction in litter on the road. The next year it was down 54 percent, and by 1990 it was down 72 percent in just five years.**

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

PHYSICAL SPACE, SOCIAL OR CULTURAL REINFORCEMENT

Physical space and cues have an influence on behavior: demonstrating how to do something, or the deliberate design of proximity and sounds, for example, can provide guidance to what "good" looks like in a specific context.

Behavior is often informed by this sense of what's "right," like social norms and dominant cultural rules. Often these are implicit attributes that inform and support how stakeholders interact more broadly at the moment—whether through a sense of hierarchy, or "those people are like that" assumptions held by the community. The key thing is that they are unspoken... often there is a "hidden in plain sight" nature to these norms.
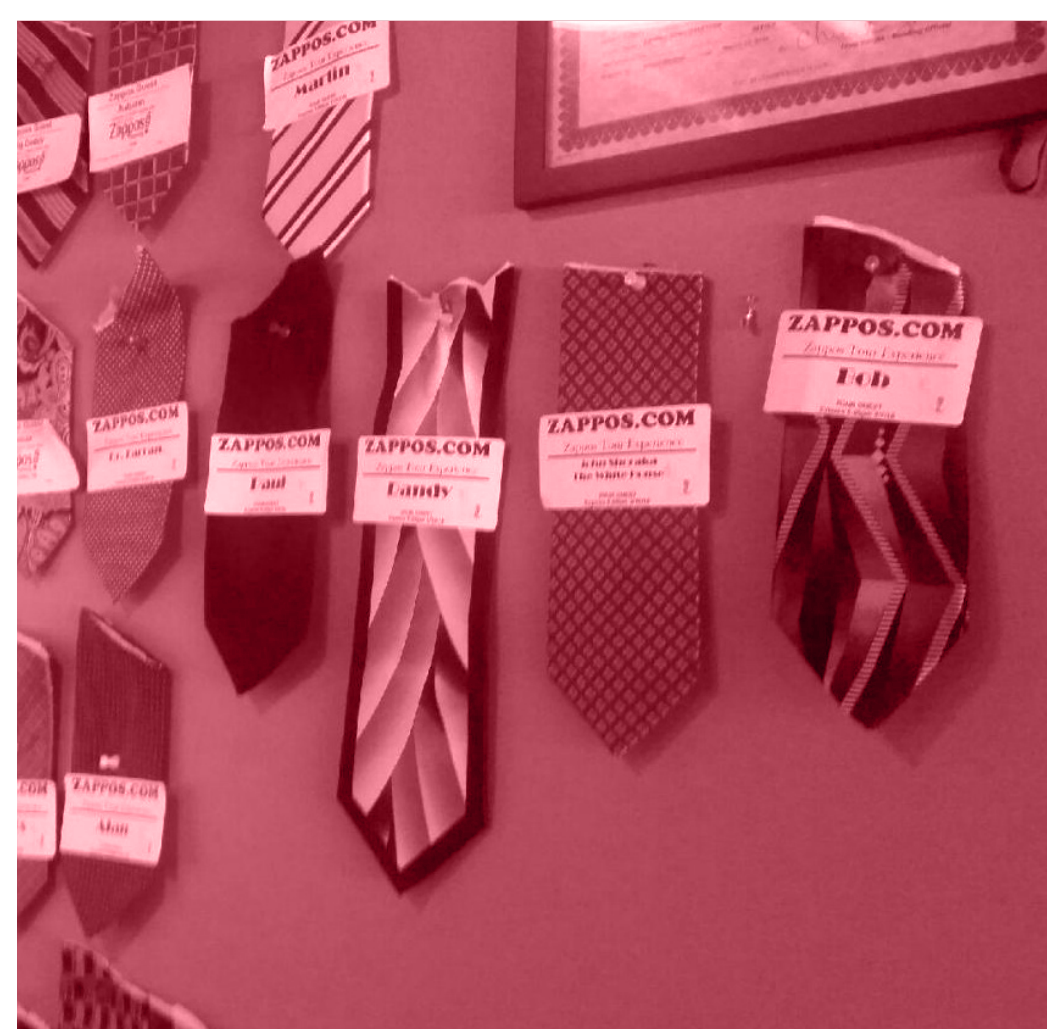

Zappo's **Wall of Ties** is a "graveyard" of ties that were worn by people who made the mistake of dressing formally in their very low-key corporate office. It's a physical manifestation of their corporate culture and organizational social norms, and it works because it's cheeky (keeping with their culture) but also very physically prominent.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

DEVICES, MATERIALS, PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES

These more "mechanical" interventions are built into the stuff we use and surround ourselves by—like an alarm clock, or an app that tells us our parking space is about to expire.

Atul Gawande's book **The Checklist Manifesto** explores how a very simple tool—a checklist—can radically reduce errors and dropped balls. A similar intervention at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore helped reduce systemic under-treatment of women by revising their blood clot prevention protocol. This change ensured that every patient received the same arc of treatment, and reduced the risk of accidental oversight.

(https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/11/opinion/a-fix-for-gender-bias-in-health-care-check.html)

Behavioral interventions in the form of tools are also useful in situations where we might be likely to be swayed—even if unintentionally, when we mean well and know better—by bias. Studies show that applicant resumes with traditionally female or ethnic names are less likely than those with traditionally masculine or Caucasian names to move through hiring processes or get job offers. Hiring software like **Applied** removes some of this bias by blinding reviewers to content—like names, or even colleges—that may subconsciously tap into our existing biases about who to hire or promote.
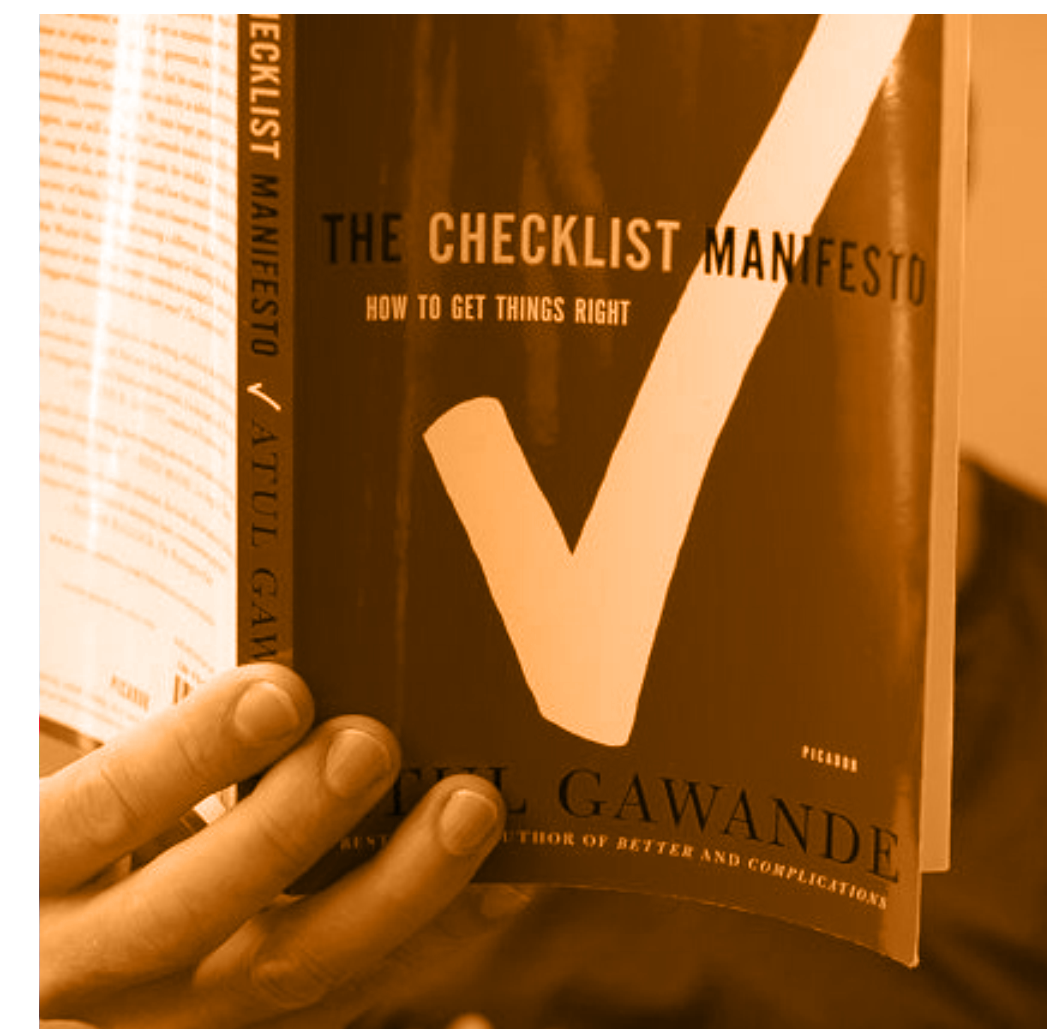

RULES AND POLICIES

FORMAL INCENTIVES, POLICIES, AND PENALTIES

Behavior can also be impacted by rules: e.g. an employee handbook tells you what is allowable or not. These more *systems-oriented* interventions tend to be broader in scale and apply to communities more than individuals.

One reason you may not speed or text while driving is because there is a system in place that says these activities can lead to a ticket. Rules can take the form of "sticks," like penalties, but also "carrots" like rewards and incentives. If my salary or rating relies on doing certain things, I am pretty likely to do them.

Informal rules can also support organizational culture. **StackOverflow's** code of conduct clearly lays out expectations for their members to maintain community norms.
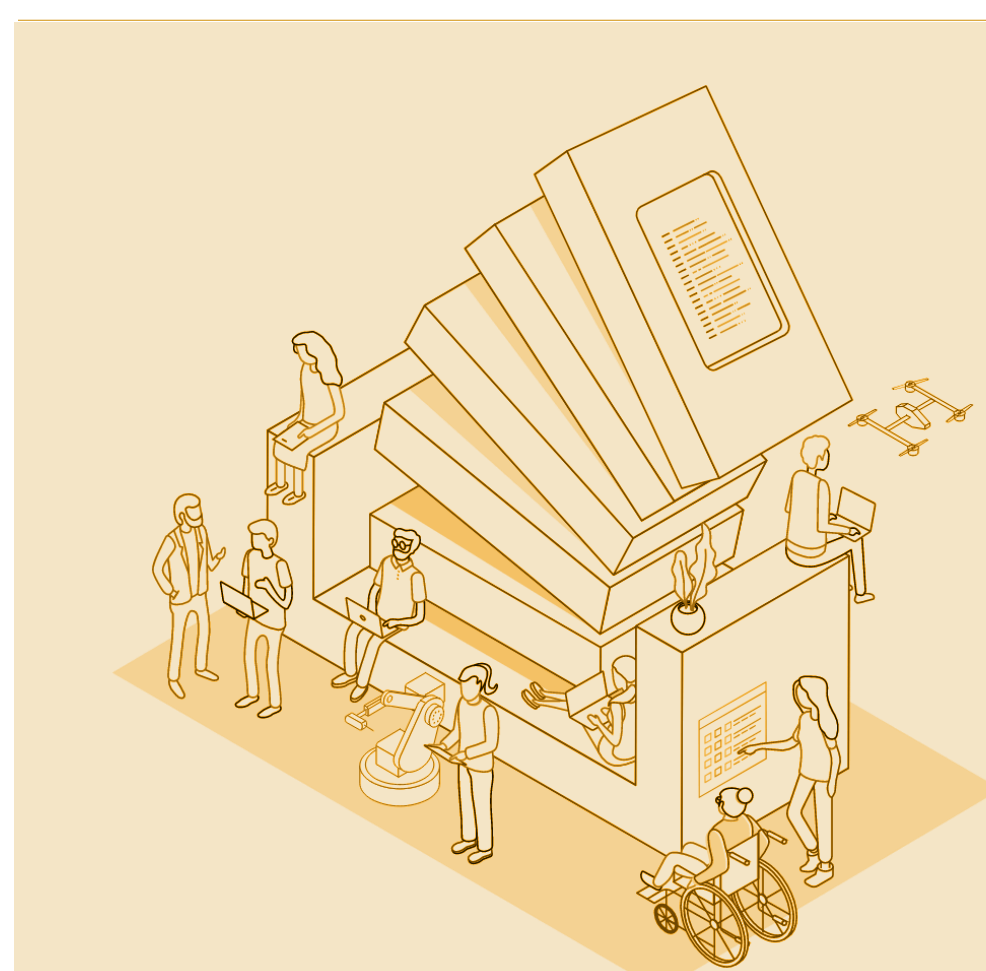
Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct helps us build a community that is rooted in kindness, collaboration, and mutual respect.

Whether you've come to ask questions or to generously share what you know, join us in building a community where all people feel welcome and can participate, regardless of expertise or identity.

We commit to enforcing and improving the Code of Conduct. It applies to everyone using Stack Overflow and the Stack Exchange network, including our team, moderators, and anyone posting to Q&A sites or chat rooms.

ME — MESSAGING AND IDENTITY

WE — PHYSICAL SPACE, SOCIAL OR CULTURAL REINFORCEMENT

Behaviors are often shaped by the coordinated intersection of all four intervention types.

Crafting effective approaches is not about finding a single perfect intervention point, but using these all these levers, in combination, as a system.

TOOLS — DEVICES, MATERIALS, PROCESSES, AND STRUCTURES

RULES — FORMAL INCENTIVES, POLICIES, AND PENALTIES