

Driving Atomic Elephants: Mastering Change with Habits and Motivation

Project Overview

Project Type: Self-initiated instructional session

Role: Instructional Designer, Facilitator

Audience: Cross-functional colleagues (individual contributors and management)

Delivery Format: 60-minute webinar, presented in American Sign Language

Design Goal: Inspire reflection, motivation, and action through synthesis of key behavioral change concepts from the books Drive, Atomic Habits, and Switch

Purpose

This session was designed not to solve a specific organizational problem, but to share impactful ideas I encountered through independent professional development. My goal was to make research-backed concepts from three widely respected books accessible and relevant to my colleagues' personal and professional growth, fostering a culture of continuous learning, reflection, and positive change.

Instructional Design Approach

Analysis and Framing

I identified the core through-line: why we change, how we build habits, and how to stay motivated. I recognized a strong presence of "we've always done it this way" mindsets in the organization and used this as context—not a problem to solve, but a backdrop for reflection.

Design Strategy

I chose a narrative and metaphor-rich format to mirror the storytelling tone of the books while keeping it accessible for a diverse peer audience. I created a clean arc: motivation to behavior to sustained change. I designed reflection prompts and activities aligned to each book's framework, such as habit loop mapping and the change path worksheet.

Development and Materials

I developed original visuals, including a custom image to represent the metaphor "Driving Atomic Elephants." I built a downloadable handout with self-assessment tools, reflection prompts, and goal-setting spaces. I incorporated structured summaries and definitions to support learners unfamiliar with the books.

Delivery

I delivered the session in American Sign Language (ASL), ensuring clarity and engagement for Deaf participants. I embedded short interactive activities at key points to increase relevance and retention. I balanced conceptual depth with practical application in a one-hour window.

Sample Learning Activities

Snapshot of Motivation (Drive)

Learners identified where autonomy, mastery, and purpose show up in their lives, and shared with a partner to surface intrinsic motivators.

Habit Tracker Challenge (Atomic Habits)

Participants reflected on their current habits, identified habit loops, and used structured templates to map one new habit they wanted to build—with built-in cues and tracking.

Map Your Change Path (Switch)

Learners created a personal change plan by identifying rational drivers, emotional motivators, a clear destination postcard, and tweaks to their environment.

Takeaway

This project allowed me to demonstrate my ability to synthesize ideas across disciplines, translate abstract theories into applied learning tools, and facilitate reflection and engagement in a short format. I designed inclusive and accessible materials for a diverse, multilingual audience. Rather than being reactive to a business need, Driving Atomic Elephants is an example of proactive knowledge-sharing and leadership through learning. It was designed to plant seeds of change by blending behavioral science with practical strategies for self and team development.