



21st Century Communication: A Reference Handbook

Social Marketing Campaigns

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Social Marketing Campaigns

Social marketing is a perspective that is frequently used by people within the communication discipline to guide them on how to influence behavior. Social marketing can be traced to the writings of the sociologist G. D. Weibe, who in the 1950s asked the question “Why can't you sell brotherhood like you sell soap?” (Weibe, 1951–1952, p. 679). Weibe was trying to make the point that marketing professionals over the years had developed very successful techniques for how to market to large-scale audiences in order to sell soap, cars, and other tangible goods. Weibe wondered why similar techniques could not be used to sell people an idea or a cause. In the 1960s and 1970s, other scholars began to follow his lead and began to develop the principles of what became known as social marketing.

To better help you understand what social marketing is, this chapter will be divided into two parts. The first part will provide an overview of the basic concepts and principles, and the second part of the chapter will offer two case studies of actual social marketing campaigns that will illustrate the concepts. The first case study tells the story of the VERB campaign that was aimed at 9- to 13-year-olds to increase their physical activity; the second case, which focused on environmental concerns, provides a unique example of how social marketing sought to help restore a threatened ecosystem in the Chesapeake Bay through an innovative campaign called “Save the Crabs, Then Eat 'Em.”

What is Social Marketing?

Answering the question of “What exactly is social marketing?” has proved to be a challenge historically. It is not its own academic discipline; it is not a science; and it is not a formal theory or model. Perhaps it is best described as a tool or framework for behavior change. In an attempt to distinguish social marketing from other types of initiatives, the noted social marketing expert Alan Andreasen (2002) offered six defining criteria:

1. Behavior change is the benchmark used to design and evaluate interventions.
2. Projects consistently grounded strategy in audience research.
3. There is careful segmentation of the target audiences to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the use of scarce resources.
4. The central element of any influence strategy is creating attractive motivational exchanges with target audiences.
5. The strategy attempts to use all four Ps of the traditional marketing mix—product, price, place, and promotion.
6. Careful attention is paid to the competition faced by the desired behavior.

In the paragraphs that follow, we offer a portrait of the basic principles of social marketing by using Andreasen's six criteria as the organizing framework.

Behavior Change

As stated in the first of the six criteria, social marketing ultimately is about behavior change. That may sound like a simple idea, but it can be quite complicated. In many instances, people do not want to change their behavior because they see no reason to do anything that is different, and their current pattern feels comfortable. The other reason is that it is difficult for social marketers to agree on the exact behavior they want people to change. Too often, campaign planners become sidetracked when they fail to make careful choices about their

precise focus, and in the end, they confuse themselves and their target audiences. For example, suppose that you wanted to create an initiative in which your ultimate goal is to significantly reduce the rate of unplanned pregnancies among high school girls. To achieve your goal, the key behavior that you might ask the young women to engage in is to always insist that their boyfriends use a condom whenever they have sexual intercourse. Or the behavior that you might ask them to adopt is to make an appointment with their family physician to get a prescription for the oral contraceptive pill. Or yet a third behavior you might choose would be to have them abstain from sexual intercourse altogether. All three behaviors are directly tied to the goal, but each is a unique behavior in which an individual can engage without necessarily performing the others. When a behavior or set of behaviors becomes too complicated, there is a high risk that an audience will ignore the initiative completely and retreat to past behaviors that are comfortable, familiar, and simple to process.

Audience Research

A second important feature of social marketing is that those who design and implement an initiative must thoroughly understand the members of the target audience whose behavior they are attempting to change. All this might sound obvious on the surface, but there are many examples of failed campaigns where designers were well intentioned but chose a strategy that was expert driven rather than audience driven. Those who take an expert-driven approach assume that the message they wish to convey will be received and acted on by target audiences simply because the experts believe that it is in the best interest of the audience to listen, attend, and behave accordingly. The social marketing perspective emphasizes that without using audience research to gain a deeper understanding of the lives of audience members and how people view a particular issue, there is little chance of persuading people to change their behavior.

Good social marketers typically begin with what is known as formative research, which allows them to gain insight into the mindsets and actions of potential audience members. Two of the most common ways of gathering data about an audience are surveys and focus groups. Surveys allow social marketers to ask audience members very specific questions over the telephone, through paper-and-pencil instruments, or through an online questionnaire. In focus groups, social marketers can bring together members of the target audience in groups of about 8 to 10 people to have an in-depth conversation about how a particular problem affects their lives. In addition to surveys and focus groups, social marketers might also use other data-gathering techniques, such as immersion hikes (day trips with members of the target audience that permit relaxed, open discussions), ethnography (observing target audiences in their everyday environments), and person-on-the-street-interviews (interviewing unscreened respondents in locations where the behavior takes place) (Smith, 2006).

Once social marketers have gained insights into their target audience through formative research, they then typically engage in a process of pretesting message concepts and final executions of the messages to make sure that they resonate with the audience. The planning team might come up with what to them seems like a good idea based on their original audience research only to find out once they test it with actual audience members that it is not a good fit. Once implementation is under way, they should also engage in what is known as process evaluation to make sure that the audience is exposed to the message as intended. Social marketers also heavily emphasize outcome evaluation, which allows them to determine whether or not the strategy worked. That is, did members of the target audience actually change their behavior? If there is no evidence for behavior change, then the initiative cannot be considered successful.

Segmentation of Audiences

According to the social marketing approach, one of the most common reasons why behavior change initiatives fail is that planners target broad populations and assume that they can implement a message strategy with a “one-size-fits-all” approach. That is, an assumption is made that everyone within a population will respond to the same message in the same way. Although it is possible for that to happen, it rarely does. Social marketers pay special attention to what is known as *audience segmentation*, which refers to the process of dividing a population into distinct segments based on characteristics that influence their responsiveness to interventions (Forthofer & Bryant, 2000). For example, suppose that you wanted to develop an intervention to persuade women in the 40-to-65 age range to get a regular mammogram for the prevention of breast cancer. Audience research might tell the social marketers that women in their 40s who are still raising children will respond to a message that is very different from one that will appeal to women who no longer have children at home and are close to retirement. If that is the case, then it is crucial to carefully segment the audience in such a way that the end goal remains the same for both groups of women but they receive a different type of message to motivate them.

Exchange

One of the most important principles that guides social marketers is the idea that people will only change their behavior when they feel that they are getting something fair and attractive in exchange. In other words, people only change when they clearly see that there is something in it for them. The basis for this principle comes from exchange theory, which is derived from psychological and economic principles and “assumes that we are need-directed beings with a natural inclination to try and improve our lot” (Hastings & Soren, 2003, p. 309). Social marketers see exchange theory as a key principle that differentiates their approach from other strategies for behavior change, such as education, which assumes that knowledge in and of itself leads to change, and an approach based on regulation, which emphasizes law enforcement as the most effective way to change the behavior of people (Smith, 2006). The challenge for social marketers is to be able to frame the behavior in the minds of the audience so that they clearly see a benefit for themselves. The challenge becomes even greater if the benefit is not perceived by the audience as immediate. If social marketers try to present a payoff to an audience that is perceived as too far in the future, then they are not likely to respond in a positive way. A great example of this challenge comes from initiatives to try to convince teenagers to quit smoking or to not even begin. An obvious benefit is that people who do not smoke greatly reduce their risk of dying of lung cancer. However, enjoying the benefit of an additional 10 years of life is not something that someone can easily relate to when one is only 16 years old. Instead, social marketers have to present to teenagers an exchange that presents a benefit in the here and now. For instance, a more attractive exchange for 16-year-olds might be to quit smoking so that they do not have the constant unpleasant smell of tobacco and, thus, are more desirable as dating partners for the opposite sex.

Marketing Mix

The identifying characteristic with which many people associate the social marketing approach is what is commonly known as The Four Ps. This component, which is borrowed from principles of commercial marketing, includes promotion, product, price, and place. According

to social marketing purists, an initiative cannot truly be referred to as social marketing unless all four Ps are part of the overall approach to behavior change.

The P that receives the most attention in any social marketing initiative is *promotion*. People who study communication often are most attracted to this element of the marketing mix because it most directly relates to the creation of the message for a campaign. Promotion receives the most attention typically because the actual message becomes the face of an initiative, and it is the part people can most easily identify. Having a carefully crafted promotion certainly is essential to success, but rarely will promotion alone lead to behavior change. The communication options available to a social marketer are many and varied. One can, for instance, promote behavior change through advertising, public relations, education, counseling, community organizations, interpersonal networks, direct mail, signage, special events and displays, printed materials, and entertainment media (Grier & Bryant, 2005; Maibach, 2002; Smith, 2000). More specific promotional tools include TV and radio public service announcements, small-group discussions with target audience members, prescription pads for use by health care professionals, refrigerator magnets, newspaper articles, coloring sheets for children, and satellite broadcasts. The most successful promotional strategies typically incorporate a variety of channels through which the message is communicated to the audience.

The second of the four Ps is *product*. Whereas commercial marketers typically are trying to sell tangible products such as paper towels or computers, the social marketer has the challenge of trying to “sell” an intangible product that takes the form of an idea, social cause, or, as we have discussed most frequently in this chapter, a change of behavior. In many ways, the job of the social marketer is a more difficult one, because members of the target audience cannot easily hold or touch a behavior in the same way that they can paper towels or computers. The challenge, then, is for the social marketer to make “these ‘intangibles’ tangible in a way that appeals to the target audience” (Lefebvre & Flora, 1988, p. 306). A tangible product also is more easily defined. If a commercial marketer asks a potential customer to buy Bounty paper towels instead of Brawny, consumers can easily find Bounty on the shelf in the supermarket once they know the name of the product and perhaps the brand logo. As we discussed in the section on behavioral focus, social marketers sometimes make the mistake of not carefully defining the behavior for the audience, and when that happens, target audience members often do not know what to do. For example, one of the greatest challenges in developing physical activity campaigns for adults is to carefully define the “product” so that there is no doubt in the mind of the target audience how to engage in the appropriate behavior. If, for instance, the message of the campaign tells people that they should engage in 20 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week, the initiative might not be successful because people are confused about whether physical activity refers to any physical movement or if they have to reach a minimum heart rate for the activity to count as part of the 20 minutes.

The third P is *price*. In commercial marketing, price usually refers to the monetary value placed on a product (Edgar, 2008). In social marketing, dollars also factor into the price someone pays to change behavior, but price refers primarily to the totality of barriers that an individual must overcome to engage in the proposed action (Smith, 2000). That is, to engage in the proposed behavior, people typically are going to have to give up something they do not want to relinquish. Nonmonetary barriers can be social, behavioral, psychological, temporal, structural, geographic, and physical (Lefebvre & Flora, 1988). As we discussed when we talked about the idea of an exchange with social marketing, people are not willing to give something up unless they believe that there is a comparable payoff that will make the price

that they have to pay worth it. Many people are willing to go into a restaurant and pay \$50 a person for a meal because they are convinced that the pleasure associated with a fine meal and the ambience of a nice dining establishment is part of a fair trade for that amount of money. The customers give the restaurant \$50 per person (plus tip, of course), and the restaurant provides them with a memorable evening. If social marketers ask members of a target audience to reduce their body weight, then people have to decide whether the advantages of not being overweight are worth the price they will have to pay to reach that goal, such as bypassing the enticing tastes of favorite foods, taking time throughout the week from one's busy schedule to engage in an exercise program, and/or feeling embarrassed in front of family and friends at social occasions when they have to forgo desserts. The burden is on the social marketer to present the choice in such a way that audience members will view the price as a reasonable one.

Place is the final P and refers to “the process by which the product is made available to members of the target market at the time and place when it will be of most value to them” (Maibach, 2002, p. 11). For social marketers to take advantage of the most ideal places, they have to identify what Grier and Bryant (2005) called “path points,” which are locations people regularly visit; times of the day, week, or year of their visits; and points in the life cycle where people are likely to act. The ultimate goal of the place strategy is convenience. That is, the social marketer wants to communicate to the target audience about the product at a time and place where it is easy for them to process the information, and the social marketer must find convenient ways for people to actually engage in the desired behavior. The importance of the place strategy illustrates why social marketers cannot concentrate on promotion alone. To be successful, social marketers might also have to take steps to make changes to the everyday environment of the target audience or, at the very least, get audience members to view their environment in a different way. For example, for an initiative aimed at getting adults to walk more, part of the overall social marketing strategy might be to increase the number of walking paths within a community so that the target audience members have more places where they can actually engage in the behavior. Or if the social marketing team is not able to create new walking paths, then part of their place strategy might be to redefine existing places that people had never before considered as potential sites for walking, such as a local shopping mall. A place strategy also includes consideration of the role of intermediaries, who are people and/or organizations that provide goods, services, and information and perform other functions that help facilitate behavior change (Grier & Bryant, 2005). For the shopping mall example, social marketers might enlist the cooperation of the owners of the mall to get them to agree to open the property earlier in the morning so that people can use the mall as a safe place for walking before any of the stores open. The mall owners might be persuaded that there is benefit in the arrangement for them because the morning walkers might be enticed to stay and shop once businesses open.

Competition

In the same way in which commercial marketers analyze their position within a competitive marketplace, social marketers must identify the behaviors that compete with the ones they want their target audience to adopt. For example, if a social marketer creates a campaign to help save the environment by asking consumers to drive their cars less and burn less gasoline, then they must carefully analyze how a reduction in car use competes with the need to get to work and complete everyday errands. Part of the overall strategy for a social marketer is to provide a way for the target audience either to eliminate the competition completely, which in many cases is not possible, or to get the audience to think about the

competition in a different way so that the conflict is less glaring. In the gasoline reduction example, for instance, social marketers might try to get their audience to think about the commute to work and the completion of errands as merged rather than separate behaviors. In other words, they might encourage the audience to plan activities such as grocery shopping and picking up the dry cleaning on the way to and from work rather than doing the errands at different times of the day.

Case Studies VERB

The number of obese children in the United States continues to rise, creating a population at risk for lifelong health problems. The percentage of overweight children has even doubled in the past 20 years, bringing a needed effort to offset this trend. Reports indicate that childhood obesity in America stems from unhealthy eating and the lack of physical activity in children's lives.

What Was the Behavior Social Marketers Wanted to Change?

To combat this epidemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was awarded \$125 million in 2001 to create a social marketing campaign targeted toward *tweens*, a term used to refer to children aged 9 to 13 years, to increase their participation in physical activity. VERB was launched in 2002 to do just that. The campaign focused solely on increasing the physical activity of tweens. Because campaign planners neither specified the exact type of physical activity in which tweens should engage nor the amount or frequency with which tweens should be physically active, some social marketing purists might have a problem with the way in which the planners of the campaign approached the definition of the behavior. However, as you will see when we talk more about the product within the marketing mix, the campaign planners were intentionally vague to more fully engage the tweens.

What Was Learned from Audience Research?

The CDC knew that they wanted to target tweens, but to apply the principles of social marketing appropriately, they knew that they had to understand the tweens themselves as well as the important people in their lives. The campaign planners decided that because tweens are still dependent on their families, the campaign had to target their mothers as well (ages 29–46). It was also important to reach community members who influence adolescents, such as teachers and youth program leaders. To get this information about the audiences' needs and wants, the CDC conducted multiple focus groups with tweens and mothers. One of the most important lessons learned from the research was that most tweens wanted to be in control of choosing the activities in which they engaged rather than having the decision made by their parents.

How Was the Audience Segmented?

Because the campaign planners suspected that the issues surrounding physical activity might be different for various ethnic groups, separate focus groups were conducted for tweens of European white descent, African Americans, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, and Asian Americans. The research revealed that, in fact, there were unique beliefs surrounding physical activity and unique barriers for each group that prevented the tweens from engaging in physical activity. Based on those results, the campaign planners developed unique variations of the VERB message for each of the major ethnic groups.

What Was the Exchange?

The planning team realized from the start that the exchange that they were offering tweens and their parents would not be an easy one to sell. For tweens to engage in more physical activity, they had to reduce the time spent doing some of the activities they currently enjoyed, such as playing video games and watching TV. With regard to the parents, increased physical activity on the part of their children had the potential to mean dollars spent. To counterbalance the loss that tweens and their parents might experience, the campaign planners positioned physical activity as something that would allow them to have fun, spend time with friends and family, and gain the admiration of their peers and community.

How Was the Marketing Mix Developed?

The *product* in social marketing is typically a precise behavior that the audience should engage in, cease, or maintain. VERB's product was physical activity, but as we discussed earlier, the campaign planners did not precisely define the type of physical activity in which the tweens should engage or say how long they should do it. They did this intentionally. They knew that just like with any product on the market, physical activity had to be perceived as the winning item over other activities in tweens' lives. The type of physical activity tweens wanted to do was up to them, giving them a sense of choice and exploration. That is, the tweens were actively involved in defining the specifics of the product.

The *price* of physical activity potentially is financial, psychological, environmental, and/or time related. The benefits of the behavior had to outweigh the costs and barriers for tweens, their parents, and the community. Research gave insight as how to market the benefits, so that tweens and parents would be more likely to prioritize physical activity within their own "budget." Marketing materials had to convince tweens and their parents that physical activity makes tweens happier, healthier, and even "cooler" than those who did not participate. In other words, VERB had to anticipate that tweens would make excuses for not "feeling good enough" when they play, by counteracting it with a message that it is much "cooler" to participate than to play video games or watch TV all day. Another barrier was the cost of buying equipment or enrolling in sports teams. If financial cost was a barrier, tweens and parents had the opportunity to go to the campaign's Web site to learn about fun and safe ideas that were free or very low in cost.

One has to have a *place* to engage in physical activity, such as a park, school, backyard, or recreation department. VERB planners had to make sure that places for engaging in activities existed and that choices would be available year round. To make this happen, the campaign planners could not act alone. An important part of the place strategy was to develop partnerships within communities so that the demand could be met. For example, in communities where there were limited outdoor venues for physical activity, the campaign partnered with community centers to make sure that kids had a safe environment in which to play. Part of the place strategy also meant strategically marketing the message of VERB in locations where tweens would be exposed to the messages in their everyday lives, such as school; the campaign planners also bought TV advertising time on their favorite shows.

The *promotion* strategy was a very complex one, because the campaign planners used a large variety of channels and types of message executions to reach the tweens and their parents. Many social marketing campaigns are at a disadvantage because they lack sufficient financial resources, but the VERB campaign was fortunate to have a multimillion dollar

budget. The CDC carefully strategized to make the VERB brand a part of tweens' lifestyle by intertwining a positive image of VERB and the product. To make the idea of VERB “cool” and relatable, the campaign planners used fun and colorful visuals. The tagline at the forefront of the campaign was “VERB—It's what you do,” which gave tweens the sense of making their own decision rather than having their parents in control.

Here are only a few examples of how VERB was communicated nationally and locally:

- *Paid television advertisements:* Rather than using free public service advertising, over which the CDC would have limited control on when or how often the ads would be aired, the campaign planners spent a large portion of their budget on a sophisticated paid advertising initiative by buying time on cable networks that tweens regularly watch, such as Nickelodeon.
- *Print ads:* Print ads were placed in magazines that tweens read as well as in those their parents read.
- *Other media opportunities:* Celebrities and characters from tweens' favorite television shows, such as *Gilmore Girls* and *Kim Possible*, starred in VERB commercials. CBS produced a VERB public service announcement directed toward parents that featured the sports legend Deion Sanders.
- *Web sites:* The campaign Web site (<http://www.VERBnow.com>) was a key element of the promotion strategy. A “game generator” gave tweens the opportunity to create their own physical activities. Tweens could even write on a blog and talk about their favorite activities.
- *Schools:* Book covers, planners, and lesson plans were given to schools to integrate into their classrooms to start the conversation about physical activity.
- *Community-based events:* VERB joined cultural events such as pow wows to engage Native American tweens. Street teams distributed T-shirts, Frisbees, and temporary tattoos for tweens while creating a buzz about VERB.

What Was the Competition?

All these elements combined created hype about VERB and physical activity for tweens. This hype, or energy, in the campaign had to transcend beyond the competition that challenges tweens to refrain from engaging in physical activity. The planners knew that tweens wanted to play video games, preferred to do nothing at all, or had family obligations. Video games or television shows could not be eliminated as an option, but the campaign had to reprioritize so that physical activity was on the list of things to do for tweens. Parents also had to see the benefit of spending money or taking the time to help their tween engage in activity.

Outcome

A random sample of 3,120 tweens from across the country along with their parents was surveyed over the phone. The results showed that 74% of American tweens were aware of the VERB campaign within 1 year of the launch of the campaign. This exceeded the CDC's goal of reaching 50% of tweens. In the first year, the surveyed tweens also reported 34% more physical activity than tweens who were unaware of VERB.

Further Readings

For more details on VERB, read two journal articles written about the campaign by Wong and

colleagues (2004) and Huhman and colleagues (2005). You can also see examples of the promotional campaign at CDC's Web site, <http://www.cdc.gov/YouthCampaign>.

“Save the Crabs, Then Eat 'Em”

The second case study tells the story of a campaign with a very different topic from VERB, which like the majority of social marketing initiatives focused on personal health issues. This campaign instead focused on the environment and attempted to make the environment, which typically seems impersonal to most people, personal. The problem involved the Chesapeake Bay near Washington, D.C.

What Was the Behavior Social Marketers Wanted to Change?

The Bay has suffered from an overload of nutrient pollution, which threatens the quality of life and water in the bay. We usually think of the word *nutrients* in a positive way, but in the world of environmental health, they mean agricultural waste, waste from sewage treatment plants, and lawn fertilizers. Many people who lived in the area already knew that the Bay was severely damaged as an ecosystem, but most people either were not motivated to do anything about it or did not know how to contribute. Because lawn fertilizers make up 11% of the nutrients that load into the Bay, a reduction in lawn fertilizer usage had the potential to make a significant difference. In 2005, the Academy for Educational Development, funded by the Chesapeake Bay Program, identified the people who live in the greater Washington, D.C., area as their primary audience and aimed to change their behavior by convincing residents to fertilize their lawns only in the fall and to forgo lawn fertilization altogether during spring.

What Was Learned from Audience Research?

Before the campaign began, a random-digit telephone survey of 602 homeowners in the Bay area was conducted to learn about what people think. Results indicated that most people cared about the environment but did not engage in behaviors to bring about meaningful change. The research also showed that an attractive lawn was important to most residents. In addition, the team found that of the homeowners in the area, 84% did their own lawn work, while 16% used lawn services. Of those who did their own lawn work, most preferred to fertilize their lawns in spring. The latter finding introduced a major challenge for the campaign, because the goal was to stop spring fertilization completely.

How Was the Audience Segmented?

Although the campaign planners chose not to segment residents into subaudiences, the research indicated that they would have to incorporate the lawn services as an audience as well. Partnerships had to be created with the service providers to promote environmentally sound practices that could last beyond the campaign.

What Was the Exchange?

The campaign planners decided that if they were going to ask people to give up fertilizing in the spring, then they had to offer something as an attractive exchange other than a good feeling about improving the environment. The team cleverly decided to position the exchange in a humorous manner by framing it within the context of food. Thus, the delightful taste of the

Chesapeake Bay's blue crab became the bargaining chip for the campaign, which became known as "Save the Crabs, Then Eat 'Em." The blue crab is a culinary favorite of area residents, and the survival of the species in the Bay, whose population hit an all-time low in 2003, due in part to nutrient pollution, also is vital to the restaurant and fishing industries of the area. The goal of the campaign was to get people to accept the primary exchange of not fertilizing their lawns in spring in return for the benefits of a bountiful blue crab harvest.

How Was the Marketing Mix Developed?

The *product* in this campaign was not to fertilize lawns in the spring and to only do it in the fall. Lawn services that became partners with the campaign were asked to engage in using appropriate fertilizers approved by the Chesapeake Bay Program. Lawn services were given the opportunity to create a Bay-friendly lawn treatment that could be done in the spring.

For the *price* strategy, social marketers had to convince homeowners in the greater D.C. area that the benefits of fertilizing only in spring outweighed the barriers to adopting the new behavior pattern. The primary barrier was the strongly held belief that spring fertilization was a necessity for having a great lawn. In addition to offering the benefit of more crabs, the intervention team also attempted to counterbalance the "spring fertilization is good" belief by introducing information to the community that fall fertilization provides an advantage because there is less rain in the fall. Less rain means less runoff of fertilizer, which in turn means better root growth, which creates a stronger lawn. Because those who own and operate lawn services also were engaged as an audience (and they were concerned about losing revenue), the campaign planners had to offer them a fair "price" as well. The lawn services that became partners in the campaign by using these special treatments, received free advertising and recognition for being environmentally friendly.

The campaign reached the target audience in many different *places*, including their homes through television advertisements and on their way to work through posters placed on public transportation. Drink coasters were also used at participating restaurants, and restaurant staff were trained on how to answer questions about the coasters.

Unlike VERB, "Save the Crabs, Then Eat 'Em" was local and had a limited budget of only \$550,000 for a 1-year campaign. More than half of that money was spent on advertising, putting pressure on the planning team to make the *promotion* strategy as efficient and cost-effective as possible. The approach was to incorporate a humorous take on eating crabs. For example, one ad placed in *The Washington Post* stated, "Protect the Crab-cake Population" and at the bottom provided a statement about fertilizing one's lawn in the fall along with a Web site link.

Many different elements were brought into the execution for the promotion of the campaign, including the following:

- *Television advertisements:* The campaign aired paid ads that were pretested by focus groups that liked and understood the connection between the blue crab and lawn care.
- *Print ads:* Major newspapers ran ads with a list of the names of lawn services that were part of the campaign. Flyers and drink coasters also were distributed at subway stops.
- *Web site:* Information on the Web site included facts about the Bay, lawn treatments, and even seafood recipes. In addition, "Chesapeake Club" lawn services were provided.
- *Promotional items:* Participating lawn care services were given window stickers and lawn signs that said, "No appetizers were harmed in the making of this lawn." By displaying

these items, homeowners could show they were participating in a good thing.

What Was the Competition?

One of the primary sources of competition that concerned the campaign planners was the fatigue the public might experience as a result of being bombarded with so many messages about saving the environment. They had to rise above the competition by offering an innovative way to get the attention of residents. The blue crab angle was the approach they offered to cut through the message clutter.

Outcome

A random-digit dial telephone survey was conducted after the campaign, which included 599 homeowners who reported that their lawn had been treated with fertilizer at some point in the past year. They found that 72% of those surveyed recalled something about the campaign and there was a decrease in intent among residents to fertilize in spring.

Further Readings

For more details on “Save the Crabs, Then Eat ‘Em,” read the journal article written about the campaign by Landers, Mitchell, Smith, Lehman, and Conner (2006). You also can see examples of the promotional campaign and recent articles about the campaign on the Web at <http://www.chesapeakeclub.org>.

Challenges and Future Directions

Social marketing has served as a very important tool for decades for individuals who want to change behavior to better the lives of others. By presenting the case studies on VERB and the Chesapeake Bay initiative, we only scratched the surface on the types of problems that social marketing can address. Social marketers have used the framework throughout the world to change the behavior of populations around issues as diverse as condom use, smoking, emergency preparedness, diabetes, food allergies, offering new food choices to children, mosquito netting, and hand-washing behavior.

In the years to come, the potential for social marketing to bring about continued change is enormous. For that to happen, however, the field of social marketing must take care to “market” itself so that its core tenets stand in clear contrast to other approaches to behavior change. One challenge that social marketing faces is that the term becomes so ubiquitous that it takes on a generic meaning that equates to all forms of campaigns and initiatives that use communication as the primary tool for creating messages about health and social causes. All social marketing, in fact, relies on communication as a key component in the promotion of an idea or behavior, but not all communication campaigns follow the principles of social marketing as we have articulated in this chapter (e.g., a focus on all four Ps, careful assessment of the competition, the needs of the audience as the driving force). The future utility of social marketing will depend in great part on the ability of the field to draw clear distinctions between itself and other change strategies.

To maximize its potential, social marketing must also keep up with the times. Adherence to core principles is key, but social marketers must be able to apply those principles within the context of a changing world. Continued devotion to innovation is crucial as the tastes, needs,

and sophistication of audiences evolve. For example, R. Craig Lefebvre, who is one of this country's leading experts on social marketing, has argued that social marketers will fail in their efforts if they do not adapt their approach to the role that new technologies and new communication forms such as cell phones, game boxes, wireless digital assistants, blogs, podcasts, and MP3 files play in our lives. He has stated that “these new technologies have implications for how we think about the behaviors, products, and services we market; the incentives and costs we focus on; the opportunities we present; and places where we interact with our audience and allow them to try new things” (Lefebvre, 2007, p. 32). The challenge for social marketers will be for their innovations in technique and strategy to keep pace with technological advancements.

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