Using Social Marketing Principles to Motivate Your Audience in a Green-Washed Marketplace

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What is Social Marketing?

“Social Marketing is the systematic application of marketing, along with other concepts and techniques, to achieve specific behavioral goals, for a social good”

- French, Blair-Stevens, NSMC 2006
Social marketers understand that...

- Behavior change is always the goal

- To change behaviors you don’t have to change people’s fundamental attitudes and beliefs

- You can work within their current attitudes and beliefs
Everyone is talking about climate change

Percent replied “yes” to having been exposed to climate change messaging

Behavior, Energy, and Climate Change Conference, 2008
But what are people hearing?
we need to act
IT’S TIME
UNPLUG PHONE CHARGERS

LoseYourExcuse.gov

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Behavior, Energy, and Climate Change Conference, 2008
Ignoring global warming won’t make it go away.
It is time for pragmatism

- Social marketers seek to change behaviors for the social good

- They don’t care *why* people change their behaviors, they care that they *do*

- Climate change messaging works for many, but not all
Identify the path of least resistance
Behavior change or climate change?

- Focus on behaviors that reduce CO2 emissions
- Find the right message for the right audience
- The wrong message can act as a barrier instead of a driver
Know who you are talking to

- Climate change is still a partisan issue

- Ideological views have an impact on how people receive your message

Percent recalled climate change messaging after verified exposure

Behavior, Energy, and Climate Change Conference, 2008
A Cardinal Sin of Social Marketing:

Missing an audience not because you planned to, but because you failed to understand them.
Top-down messaging misses the mark

- You audience will hear what they want to hear

- What motivates one person could alienate another

- Success requires careful segmentation and messaging strategy
Seeing your audiences’ perspective

Political/Economic Sphere
- Demographics
- Technologies
- Economies
- Policies
- Access
- Geography
- Social Networks
- Cultural Currency

Social Sphere
- Family
- Self Efficacy
- Psychographics
- Social Networks
- Geography

Psychological Sphere
- Psycho-graphics
- Self Efficacy

Behavior, Energy, and Climate Change Conference, 2008
Seeing your audiences’ perspective

- What are the perceived & actual institutional barriers that enable and/or constrain behavior?
- How do structural limitations limit behavior choice?
- Who are the key social stakeholders in the life of the target audience?
- What is the cultural currency of the target audience?
- What are the prevailing belief systems of the target audience?
- What are symbolic and actual needs of the target audience?

Political and Economic Considerations

Social Considerations

Psychological Considerations
Identify where you can have an impact
Messaging must be deliberate and targeted

- Policy makers must carefully choose their objectives: changing beliefs or changing behavior
- Messaging must speak to the most appropriate values, attitudes, and beliefs of your audience
- Changing behavior does not necessarily require changing beliefs, rather working within belief systems
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