

Best Practices

Social Marketing

Description

Social marketing uses commercial marketing tools to “sell” products and ideas for the public good. The key to a successful social marketing campaign is learning what will work with the target population. This is far more effective than simply telling people what they “should do.” The target population is more likely to adopt a desired behavior if we assess and subsequently try to change their attitudes toward the behavior, their perceptions of benefits of the new behavior, and their perceptions of how they think their peers will view their behavior.

Social Marketing and Health Communications, SAMHSA

The process of applying basic (commercial) marketing techniques to social issues in order to create behavior change.

(Kotler and Andreasen, 1987)

Strategy

Social marketing uses commercial marketing tools to “sell” products and ideas for the public good. The key to a successful social marketing campaign is learning what will work with the target population. This is far more effective than simply telling people what they “should do.” The target population is more likely to adopt a desired behavior if we assess and subsequently try to change their attitudes toward the behavior, their perceptions of benefits of the new behavior, and their perceptions of how they think their peers will view their behavior.

Activities:

- Radio and television campaigns
- Multilevel media campaigns that include billboards, posters, magazines, radio, and television
- A mass-media campaign linked to a school-based prevention intervention
- Airing of anti-tobacco anti-alcohol media campaigns on prime-time television
- Counter-advertising, in the form of multi-component media-based prevention efforts, can have an effect on youth with regard to awareness of media campaigns, decreased smoking prevalence, and nonsmokers' decreased intention to start. These efforts demonstrate the ability to result in increased negative attitudes toward smoking, an increased understanding of the consequences of smoking, and decreased rates of friends' approval of smoking.
- Multi-component prevention efforts are more effective than single-component prevention programs. Media campaigns have been shown to support and promote other components and vice versa. Effective media campaigns involve linkages with other intervention activities.
- To be effective, media messages should be age appropriate and designed with the target audience's developmental stage in mind. In particular, messages should not be too subtle or too sophisticated.

The Four “P’s” of Social Marketing

Product
Promotion

Price
Place

Source: Social Marketing and Health Communications, SAMHSA

Research

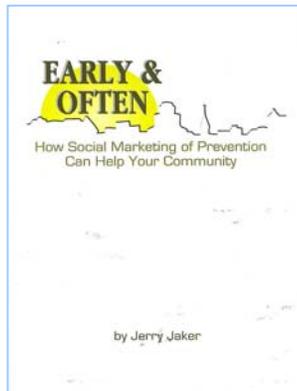
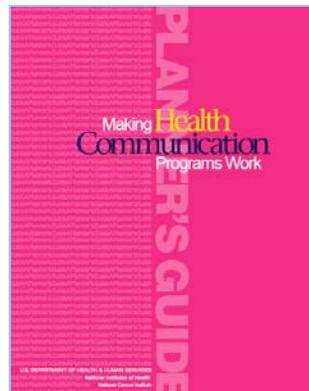
Evaluation studies have shown that public education campaigns alone can be effective in increasing the public's awareness about a health issue. In conjunction with other strategies, they have also contributed to changes in people's behaviors. For example:

- Public education has been shown to be effective at publicizing newly available services, such as smoking cessation programs. *Michigan Department of Public Health, 1990*
- Free and paid PSA campaigns alone have been effective in reducing drinking and driving behaviors. *Murry, J. P., Stam, A., and Lastovika, J. L. (1993)*
- Public education campaigns combined with enforcement efforts have been shown to reduce the illegal sales of tobacco to youth. *Altman, D. G., Rasenick-Douss, L., Foster, V., and Tye, J. B. (1989).*

Outcomes

Evaluation studies suggest that social marketing campaigns, in conjunction with other prevention strategies, can play an important role in changing people's behavior:

- Combining a social marketing campaign with a classroom intervention can be effective in increasing high school students' knowledge about alcohol use and its effects. *Collins, D. and Cellucci, T. (1991)*
- Combining a social marketing campaign and a classroom intervention can increase anti-smoking attitudes in elementary, middle, and high school students. *Flynn, B. S., Worden, J. K., Secker-Walker, R. H., Pirie, P. L., Badger, G. J., Carpenter, J. H., and Geller, B. M. (1994)*
- Combining a social marketing campaign and a classroom intervention can be effective in increasing students' social resistance skills and, at the middle school level, decreasing the amount that they smoked. *Flay, B. (1987)*



Download The Above Free Resources

Counter-Advertising and The Media [PDF](#), Making Health Communication Programs Work [PDF](#), Early and Often, Prevention Briefing; Social Marketing [PDF](#), Youth in Action Series, Working with The Media OJJDP (not shown) [PDF](#)

Contacts

The Social Marketing Network website <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/socialmarketing/>
Impact! Social Marketing: Persuasive Communication of Public Health
<http://www.emprc.org/jan98/social.html>
Higher Education Center and Social Marketing/Social Norms
<http://www.edc.org/hec/socialnorms/>

For information on Wisconsin sites utilizing this best practice, contact the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources