



Ten Commandments of Social Marketing

By: Jim Mintz Director, Centre of Excellence for Public Sector Marketing

The following are the Ten Commandments of Social Marketing.

1. **If staff running the campaign are not trained in marketing and do not have a good grasp of marketing concepts and theory then more than likely the campaign initiative will not succeed.** For reasons which are a complete mystery to me, most social marketing initiatives seem to be run by individuals who have no background in marketing. Can you imagine someone in the private sector being asked to lead a marketing initiative with no formal training in marketing? Not likely, but frequently staff responsible for managing social marketing campaigns have no basic training in the field of marketing. Most come from the field of communications, which may explain why many campaigns are heavy on communications but lack basic marketing principles and techniques.

2. **There are 4 p's to marketing** but check out social marketing campaigns and see how many actually address the 4 p's of marketing... very few. Most campaigns tend to be social communications or advertising campaigns but few are really social marketing.

3. **Segmentation is the key to effective social marketing** but many campaigns are not targeted and focus on the "general public". Some campaigns use demographics and geographic segmentation but remember with social marketing you are dealing with behaviour change and the most important type of segmentation in social marketing is psychographics, but how many social marketers have used psychographic segmentation to develop campaigns... very few.

4. **Examine the factors influencing the adoption of the behaviour change** (i.e. perceived barriers/potential benefits for targeted behaviour as well as competing behaviours /forces). To be effective in the field of social marketing and influence behaviour change, marketers must understand what their target audiences perceive to be the barriers to change. Marketers focus on removing barriers to an activity while simultaneously enhancing the benefits. There is a tendency for individuals to respond positively to actions that are highly beneficial and have few barriers. Social marketers conduct research to discover the key barriers and potential benefits and then develop strategies and tactics that addresses them. The safer, healthier etc. behaviour you promote is competing with many other choices your target audience can make, including the behaviour they may be performing now. To be effective, your strategy must make your proposed behaviour at least as attractive as the alternatives. People do things because they get benefits in return. Barriers make it harder for people to act. Your research must uncover which benefits the target audience wants more, and which barriers they struggle with most. Your strategy depends on this.

5. **Pay attention to social norms** which are people's beliefs about the attitudes and behaviours that are normal, acceptable, or even expected in a particular social context. In many situations, people's perception of these norms will greatly influence their behaviour.

Therefore, when people misperceive the norms of their group—that is, when they inaccurately think an attitude or behaviour is more (or less) common than is actually the case—they may choose to engage in behaviours that are in sync with those false norms. The social norm process works by collecting data on the actual versus perceived behavioural norms. If there is an over-exaggeration of the norms, then social marketing messages and tactics are developed to communicate the true norms that exist. By continuing to communicate the true norms, the myth that everybody is doing it is slowly eroded away until the group realizes that the majority are doing what's right. When this positive message is sustained for a year or two, the negative behaviours of the group begin to shift downward to reflect the majority behaviour.

6. **Employ upstream efforts**, which aim to change the political, social, legal, and physical or public policy environment by giving messages to industry or government. The upstream concept involves influencing decisions makers and facilitating changes in environments so change (individual or systemic) can take place. Think of social change as a stream. Typically organizations do a lot of work downstream – working one-on-one on individual behaviour change. And this is good. But until norms are shifted and the behaviour is seen as acceptable and desirable, the change can be isolated and short-lived. By moving further upstream and also involving community influential's or organizations whose actions are needed to bring about change, you have more of a chance to create widespread and sustained change.

7. **Objectives must be measurable.** Also set objectives for the following **3 types of objectives**:

- **Behaviour objectives** are simple clear and doable actions.

- **Belief objectives** are tied to attitudes, opinions, feelings or values held by the target audience. For instance the individual may need to believe that their current behaviour is putting themselves, their families or society at risk, that they are capable of performing the desired behaviour and that the behaviour will produce the desired results.

· **Knowledge objectives** are based on statistics or facts that could motivate the target audience. In particular, the target audience should know the benefits of the proposed behaviour and what tools they can access to help them with behaviour change.

8. Positioning is a key element to social marketing. In social marketing, products are hard to promote because of their high “price.” Products like behaviours and attitudes require long term commitments and do not sell as easily as a bar of soap or a car. The cost of a social marketing product often includes a person’s time and effort, giving up things they like, embarrassment or inconvenience, or social disapproval. To counteract factors working against adoption of the product, we need to acknowledge these potential problems and address them.

Your product positioning determines how the people in your target audience think about your product as compared to the competition. Product positioning is usually based on either the benefits of the product or removal of barriers. By talking about your product with the target audience, you can learn the benefits they value most and the barriers they foresee.

Decisions regarding product will determine positioning. In social marketing it includes the perceptions, impressions and feelings that consumers have for the product. It is important to make choices that are based on a clear understanding of your competition. Know the needs, wants and preferences that your target market associates with their current behaviour (i.e. your competitor). Make choices that ensure that your target audience will see your product as offering more and greater benefits than the one they associate with their current behaviour. The product’s positioning should be thought of as the way the product is defined by consumers on important attributes-the place the product occupies in the consumers’ minds relative to competing products. (Source: Nedra Kline Weinreich, Spare Change Blog)

9. Innovation in methods/tactics used to deliver messages is key to success in social marketing.

Strategies should use a combination of social marketing targeted tactics directed to key target groups. It is more effective to reach target audiences with messages that are relevant and will resonate with them. What tends to happen is organizations hire advertising, public relations or web experts and guess what your tactics are focused on ...advertising, public relations and web.

There is no secret to ensuring you are using the right methods/ tactics. If you have done your home work and develop a comprehensive social marketing plan ... not a communications/public relations or public education/outreach plan ... you are much more likely to make the right decisions on selecting the right tactics.

Three tactics that tend to be overlooked are:

“Face to face marketing”: We are so programmed to use conventional communications tactics like the web and publications and other forms of communications that we sometimes forget that the solution to the communications problem may be as simple as getting out of your office and talking to people.

Strategic Alliances: When developing your tactical plans it is a good idea to consider how you can expand the reach of your messages through strategic alliances. You may wish to identify specific organizations or simply the types of organizations with whom you will develop alliances. Partnerships between external organizations for the purpose of delivering information to citizens are becoming increasingly popular. Strategic alliances are gaining recognition by all sectors whether they are public,

private or non-profit as a legitimate and effective way of reaching and influencing individuals. Partnerships need to be considered as an integral tool for delivering cost effective messages to audiences identified for the campaign. It is believed that both the tangible (e.g. marketing and distribution networks) and intangible (e.g. credibility, associative) value of partnerships could be substantial and these partnerships should be leveraged to deliver psychologically-targeted, positive and sustained messages to target audiences. An expanded marketing network composed of government, as well as corporate sector, non-profits, interest groups, coalitions, professional associations, academia and opinion leaders will improve credibility tremendously, over a single-source marketing campaign. They will also help effectively saturate the media while spreading the cost across all sectors. Strategic Alliances require common and compatible objectives and they should be used to assist an organization do something it cannot do on its own. Strategic alliances can be risky and developing them can be time consuming so only enter into a strategic alliance when the benefit to your organization is clear.

Social Media Marketing: We now live in an era where the communication and marketing landscape has been completely turned upside down. Organizations and governments are no longer in full control of their messages/brands; the consumer/citizen is. The whole Web 2.0 revolution is essentially synonymous with the democratization of the web. It's about engagement and dialogue as opposed to one-way communication. The technological barriers that have restricted the "one-2-many" model of communication are no longer present. Now anyone can start a blog, post a video, write a review, join a social network, start a podcast (in seconds), and have their content viewed or heard by millions at virtually no cost. There are over 175,000 new blogs every day. Bloggers update their blogs regularly to the tune of over 1.6 million posts per day, or over 18 updates a second. There are more podcasts than there are radio stations in the world! The topics cover every niche imaginable. The questions each organization should be asking themselves (and know the answers to) are: "What are people saying about us?" and "How can we get engaged to make a favourable impact"? A proper social media marketing strategy as part of an integrated social marketing strategy can help organizations navigate through the world of digital marketing and steer it towards the path of success using these new channels in enhancing their social marketing initiative.

10. **Evaluate evaluate evaluate.** If you have measureable objectives, evaluation should not be difficult. The one approach that works well for social marketers is benchmarking /tracking approach. Benchmark surveys are conducted before a campaign to determine knowledge, behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of the target audience. After the campaign the same questions are asked in a tracking survey. The results of both studies are compared to determine whether the campaign has had an effect on the target audience(s). However there are a number of other methodologies but most important make sure to measure knowledge, beliefs/attitudes/behaviours.

Once the evaluation is completed make sure to take appropriate measures to enhance and improve the campaign. Don't be disappointed if at first your evaluation shows that your campaign has not been successful. Learn by thoroughly analyzing the results of the evaluation and make the necessary changes.

Oh and one more thing make sure you have staff and or contractors who know how to implement a social marketing campaign and have experience in campaign management. Many excellent plans fail because of poor execution. Execution of the plan is where "rubber hits the road" so making sure you have experienced staff or contractors who know how to manage the implementation of a social marketing campaign is real important.