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Community groups do many different things to solve the issues that interest them. A group fighting child hunger might advocate free breakfasts at school, increased funding for WIC (Women and Infant Children), and more child-oriented legislation from the state senate. And to accomplish each of these goals, the group will again probably do many different things: letter-writing campaigns, direct lobbying, and advertising in the media, to name just a few. Thousands of details and hard work by many people are usually involved in a successful initiative.

Looked at from a different perspective, however, it comes down to one thing. At the root of all of the group's work is one basic principle: change people's behavior. This is true not only for a child hunger campaign, but for almost any health or community development initiative. A coalition against violence wants people to stop committing acts of violence. A teen pregnancy initiative tries to put an end to children having children. And an organization for peace looks for the day when world peace is more than a lovely thought on holiday greeting cards.

This concept of changing people's behavior is the basis of this section, and of social marketing as a whole. We will talk about what social marketing is, and why it can be of use to you in your organization. Then, we'll go into more depth on marketing, and discuss what are known as the "4 Ps"—the four elements around which all types of marketing, social or profit-oriented, are centered. Finally, we'll finish with an overview of the stages someone will go through if their effort is successful.

It's a lot of information, and much of it is more conceptual in nature than many other sections of the Tool Box. The next three sections of this chapter, then, will try to ground these ideas more thoroughly, so they can be used in your day-to-day work.

- Chapter 45, Section 2: Conducting a Social Marketing Campaign, will help you determine why and when you might implement a social marketing campaign, then explain the major steps in managing one.
- Chapter 45, Section 3: Listening to Those Whose Behavior Matters, will help you prepare an effective social marketing campaign by enlisting the help of those whose behavior you seek to change.
- In Chapter 45, Section 4: Segmenting the Market to Reach the Targeted Population and Section 5: Promoting Awareness and Interest Through Communication, specific phases of developing and implementing a social marketing effort are discussed. The next three sections of the chapter (Sections 6, 7 and 8) focus on promoting, maintaining, and monitoring behavior change.
What is social marketing?

So what, exactly, is social marketing? In Social Marketing Report, it’s defined as, “the application of commercial marketing techniques to social problems.” It means to take the same principles used in selling goods--such as shoes, television shows, or pizza--to convince people to change their behavior.

What does that mean? Well, instead of selling hamburgers, you’re selling a life without heart attacks. Instead of convincing teen-agers to buy blue jeans, you’re convincing them to buy the advantages of postponing pregnancy.

Of course, if you are selling blue jeans, you’re still trying to influence behavior--you’re convincing people they need to wear your jeans--either for comfort, or for style, or for value. So then, what is the difference between social marketing and commercial marketing?

ёт really summed up in one key point: commercial marketing tries to change people's behavior for the benefit of the marketer; social marketing tries to change people's behavior for the benefit of the consumer, or of society as a whole.

What is involved in social marketing? In a nutshell, when conducting a social marketing campaign, you’ll do the following:

- **Identify what behavior you want to change** (for example, increase prenatal counseling among expectant mothers).

- **Identify your audience**: Whose behavior do you want to change? It may be that you want to change the behavior of several different groups; in that case, you may want to influence them in different ways to bring them closer to the desired behavior. Such groups are often separated, or segmented, by age, gender, level of education, or race.

- **Identify the barriers to change**: through interviews, surveys, focus groups or other methods, you’ll want to find out what makes it difficult or unattractive for people to make these changes. Do pregnant women feel uncomfortable at the area clinic, or are they made to feel stupid when they talk to the doctor? Is the clinic too far away? Can they not take the time away from their jobs?

- **Reduce the barriers to change**: Plan ways to make it easier, more accessible, and more attractive. Can the clinic stay open longer hours? Can physicians and nurses be better trained to discuss problems with women? This step might even be taken a step farther. Your organization might provide incentives for making (and sustaining) changes. Mothers who come to the clinic regularly through their pregnancy might receive coupons for free baby food, for example.

- **Pretest your ideas** on a small number of people, then modify your plan according to your results.

- **Publicize both the benefits of change, and also your efforts to make change easier** in a way that will draw people to take advantage of your efforts. Let people know what you’re doing to help them--the best program in the world won’t be used if people don’t know about it. And of course, people need to understand the benefits of the behavior change. A pregnant woman will probably want to do what’s best for her child, but may not know that she needs extra iron during her pregnancy. It’s up to your organization to tell her.

And, although it’s not technically a part of social marketing, you’ll probably want to...

- **Assess your results** and see if you have created the change you wanted.
The above list represents just the bare bones of a social marketing effort. Each of these points will be discussed in detail later in this section, and in Section Four of this chapter. For a full example of a very successful nationwide social marketing plan, see the Examples section at the end of the main text.

**Social marketing and advertising**

A lot of people confuse social marketing with one of its components, advertising. But leaves are just one part of the tree—even when they’re only part you can see. Likewise, advertising is a very important part of social marketing, but it's still just a part.

Is that confusing? Well, look at the following messages:

"This is your brain on drugs," said the Partnership for a Drug-Free America’s advertisement a few years ago, while picturing an egg frying on a skillet. That was a memorable advertisement; but if that was all the Partnership had done, it wouldn’t qualify as social marketing.

"Don’t mess with Texas," was a well-known anti-litter campaign in that state. But if the ad had been aired without additional trashcans placed around the state, or without having been directed at specific group of people in Texas (such as youth, or immigrants, or tourists); it would have been nothing more than a catchy slogan. It wouldn’t have been social marketing.

On the other hand...

Smokey the Bear and his admonition, "Only you can prevent forest fires," when seen alone on T.V., are again just an advertisement. But taken in context of all of the work done by the U.S. Forestry Service, the result that emerges is a social marketing campaign. Smokey is trying to change a particular behavior (being careless with fire); his message is targeted at a specific audience (six to ten year olds), and information he provides (on commercials, on the Internet and elsewhere) overcomes two major barriers to children being careful with fire: ignorance and also the scientific, "it's no fun" barrier. Further, the message is supported with information provided to parents at the campsites, making it more likely they will provide reinforcement to the message. That's social marketing. It uses targeted marketing, reinforcement, and it reduces barriers--three key elements missing from the two examples above.

**Who can do social marketing?**

The bad news is, there is a definite art to it--it's not all something you’re born with, and it's not only common sense. After all, people get degrees in this stuff; and major corporations such as Nike or Coca-Cola spend millions of dollars to ensure that their marketing campaigns are state-of-the-art.

Now for the good news: first of all, it's learnable. You may not have been born with phrases like market segmentation floating around in your head, but you can learn what they mean, and how to use them.

Second, it's scalable. Some campaigns are quite large, such as the National High Blood Pressure campaign discussed in the Examples at the end of this section. However, social marketing campaigns can also be quite a bit smaller. That is, you can do it on a local level, when you have limited resources. Just because your group doesn’t run the Hyatt Regency, or hasn’t resources anywhere in the same ballpark, that doesn't mean you can't take the same principles and put into effect the change that you want to see in your community.
Why is social marketing important?

So what makes the concept of social marketing particularly important? Perhaps you've been doing your work quite effectively for years without ever even hearing the phrase. That's actually pretty likely; the phrase was only coined about 25 years ago. There are three major advantages, however, which suggest that social marketing is worthy of your consideration:

- It helps you reach the target audiences you want to reach.
- It helps you customize your message to those targeted audiences; and by doing so,
- It helps you create greater and longer-lasting behavior change in those audiences.

Bottom line? Social marketing is a good idea because it works.

Basic principles of marketing: The "4 Ps"

Before we discuss social marketing further, however, it's important to have a grasp on the principles of commercial marketing, since that is what it's based on. As community health workers, or members of non-profit organizations, the idea might seem a bit odd. We're used to a completely different mindset. Terms like "marketing" may conjure up images of big business and corporate greed; they certainly don't make us think of programs to try to help our neighbors.

Even so, your neighbors may not be open to your ideas and programs right off the bat, and you may find yourself having to persuade them. This is what social marketing excels at. The idea may be new for you, or a complete change in how you perceive things. That change, however, may end up being the breath of air your organization needs to become even more effective in changing behavior.

Does that make sense to you? Then let's go on to some of the basic principles of marketing.

The essence of all marketing can be summed up in what has been termed the "4 Ps." They are product, price, place, and promotion. Let's look at each in turn.

1. **Product** -- The product is what you are marketing. For social marketing, the "product" is a certain behavior you are trying to change. It might be ending child abuse and neglect, or stopping people from committing suicide, or convincing people to not throw trash on the ground--or any other behavior that members of your community want to modify.

2. **Price** -- How much will it cost a person to stop (or take on) a certain behavior? In social marketing, price isn't just a question of dollars and cents. It can also be a question of time (i.e., how long will it take me to find a trash can?), or how much of an effort a behavior change will take. A life-long smoker may be the first person to admit that smoking is an extremely expensive habit, but may still say the costs--in terms of effort, or possible weight gain, or nicotine withdrawal--are too high. He just can't quit.

   A good social marketing plan, then will try to reduce these costs. An anti-litter campaign will try to place more trash cans around the city; a smoking cessation group might offer support groups to help with the effort, nutrition counseling to counteract weight gain, and nicotine patches to reduce the pangs of withdrawal.

3. **Place** -- How difficult is it to change the behavior? What barriers are preventing it? If you are selling blue jeans, you want to have them in stores across the country, not just in one small boutique in Snellville, Georgia. Otherwise, people in Oregon won't be able to get them, even if they want to.
Likewise, if you are "selling" teen pregnancy prevention, what barriers make it difficult to prevent those pregnancies? Can teen-agers easily obtain birth control, or is it difficult for them to get hold of? Maybe there isn't a good teen clinic in town. Or if there is a clinic available, maybe it's all the way across town, and it's only open on weekdays until 4:00, making it difficult to get to without missing school.

Social marketing efforts make it easier to change behavior by making sure the necessary supports are not only available, but also easily accessible to the most people possible. The less people need to go out of their way to make a change, the more likely they are to make it.

4. *Promotion* -- Promotion is the last of the "4 Ps," and the one most easily associated with social marketing. Promotion is the advertising you do; be it in television commercials, letters to the editor, or red ribbons tied to car antennas.

Promoting your cause doesn't need to take a lot of money. It can also take place through less costly methods, such as good old-fashioned word of mouth. Convincing people through a one-on-one conversation can be just as effective at changing someone's point of view as the best made commercial, or even more so. (Think about it. Which would make you get a tetanus booster: a television commercial or a suggestion from your doctor?) Word of mouth is a highly desirable part of social marketing.

*Remember, though--advertising alone is not social marketing.*

**Stages of a successful social marketing effort**

With that understanding of marketing in mind, let's turn now to the focal point of an effective campaign--the consumer. People will have different ideas and beliefs at different times. For example, among smokers, some may not believe smoking is that bad for them, others might understand the risks but not care, still others may not want to take the effort to stop smoking, and a final group of smokers may be actively trying to quit. A social marketing campaign will see all of these beliefs (and their related actions) as part of a continuum, and try to move people along to the next step.

The idea is that these changes won't happen overnight. Most people won't go immediately from believing smoking is "cool" and not really understanding the health risks to quitting right away. Instead, a social marketing campaign might start them thinking that it's not the best thing to do--and after that idea has had time to turn around in their head for a while, another part of the campaign will help them quit, and yet another part will help them remain smoke free.

How are these beliefs shaped and decisions made? Well, generally speaking, the following activities need to occur:

- Create awareness and interest
- Change attitudes and conditions
- Motivate people to *want* to change their behavior
- Empower people to act
- Prevent backsliding
To clarify each, let's look at a step-by-step example.

In much of Africa, women have traditionally had many, many children; in such countries as Nigeria, the average woman might bear as many as 12 children during her lifetime. A social marketing message that has been widely disseminated, then, is have fewer children. This message has been geared towards the goals of increasing women's health, and decreasing overpopulation and famine.

1. **Create awareness and interest.** The recipient must get the message, literally. You have to get the recipient's attention. The message needs to be brought to women all over the country, including village women who are generally illiterate, speak only a local dialect, and who often don't have access to television or radios. Also, the recipient must understand the message. Not only does the message need to be conveyed to the women in a language they understand; it needs to make sense for the their lives as well. For women in Africa, wealth and status have traditionally been tied up in how many children they bear. The idea of having fewer children hasn't made sense because doing so would have hurt their standing in the community, even if it would improve their health.

2. **Change attitudes and conditions.** The recipient has to develop a positive attitude or positive frame of mind about the behavior in question. With effective social marketing, African women might come to think, "Maybe it is better to have fewer children."

3. **Motivate people to want to change their behavior.** The recipient has to form an intention to act on the basis of that attitude. It's not enough to just convince people that something is a good idea. A leap needs to be made from thinking something is a "good idea" to the stage of "I will do that." Think about it--how many of us think it would be a really good idea to cut down on our fat intake, or get up at 5:00 a.m. to exercise? Social marketing helps people move from attitude to intention, and beyond. For African women, this might mean taking the leap to find out about birth control or planning to postpone intercourse.

4. **Empowering people to act.** The recipient has to act, i.e., convert that intention into action. A woman or her partner needs to go to the clinic and get the birth control, and use it.

5. **Prevent backsliding.** Often, the recipient's action must be followed by reinforcement, by the provision of some benefit for having acted, so that the desired action will be repeated. How is her life better in a meaningful way for having fewer children? Will her friends and family improve? Will she have more money? Can she go to school? Is she healthier than her neighbors?

As we mentioned above, not every person will be at the same place on the continuum. It's like they are at different points on a bridge, spanning from attention to action. The tasks of the marketer are first to know who stands where on the bridge, and then to design messages to move each targeted person or group one or more stages further along that bridge, in the direction of desired action.

**To sum it up:**

Social marketing is a concept that's fairly new to the health and development field. Nonetheless, it's an idea that shows immense promise, and can give you an excellent framework through which your organization can do what you have set out to do: help individuals and society as a whole live better lives. Is this something that can be used to further the goals of your program or coalition? The next section of this chapter, *Conducting a Social Marketing Campaign*, will help you decide the answer to just this question.

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Resources

Web pages
Social Marketing Place [http://www.social-marketing.com/] Definitions, articles, and links
The Social Marketing Network of Canada [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/socialmarketing/] Introductory information, presentations, case studies, tutorials and links to other sites
Social Marketing Manual [http://www.ilgard.ohiou.edu/apwr/training/social_marketing_overview.htm] Ohio University's page of links, ethics, definitions and resources

Print Resources

Listservers
Social Marketing ListServer
To subscribe to the social marketing listserv run by Alan Andreasen at Georgetown: Send mail to listserv@listserv.georgetown.edu with a message saying "subscribe soc-mktg your name" with your own name in place of "your name." The listserver will return a message asking for confirmation and then you're on.