The Community Tool Box
(www.ctb.ku.org)

Listening to Those Whose Behavior Matters
Main Section  Contributed by Phil Rabinowitz Edited by Valerie Renault

Why listen to the people whose behavior you're trying to change?
Who are the people to whom you need to listen?
How do you contact those whose behavior matters?
How do you listen to those whose behavior matters?

The Porterville Environmental Consortium was stumped. They'd been sure that their big push for cutting down on fossil fuel consumption would bear fruit. With visions of car-free bicycle zones, solar-heated and -cooled public buildings, and windmill arrays, they'd begun a campaign to convince the public that everyone in Porterville could pay less and live better by using alternative energy and practicing conservation.

But almost a year and several thousands of dollars later, the campaign seemed to be having no effect at all. The streets were still clogged with SUV's, brownouts were frequent, and the members of the Consortium were scratching their heads. They'd thought out the ads they used really carefully, filling them with scenes of windmills turning against a blue sky, solar panels on houses, and happy people on bicycles and walking. There were billboards in the neighborhoods near the university, and ads ran on public TV and on the university radio station. The Consortium couldn't understand why there was so little response.

What the Consortium had failed to do was ask the people who would have to change - the folks who'd trade in their SUV's for small cars, who'd give up their air conditioning and open the windows, who'd spend several thousand dollars to install solar panels - what would make them do those things. The Consortium's ads didn't address people 's concerns, but rather fed into them. A lot of people thought a windmill farm would be ugly, and they didn't want it anywhere near where they lived. Others wondered how they'd manage riding a bike or walking to work, when they hadn't exercised in years.

Many people never even saw or heard the Consortium's ads, because they weren't placed where most of the community would be exposed to them. By placing ads on public TV and radio and near the university, the Consortium was just preaching to the choir - trying to convince people who were already convinced. The Consortium's campaign never paid any attention to the people it was trying to reach... and it didn't reach them.

Social marketing is a great deal more than simply telling people what you'd like them to do. Now that you know what social marketing is in general (see Section 1 of this chapter: Understanding Social Marketing: Encouraging Adoption and Use of Valued Products and Practices), and what to use it for (see Section 2: Conducting a Social Marketing Campaign), this section and those that follow will help fill in the details of preparing and running an effort that will get results. Here, we'll look at how to prepare an effective social marketing effort by enlisting the help of those to whom you're marketing.

Why listen to the people whose behavior you're trying to change?

There are two answers to this question. The first is a matter of simple respect. It's disrespectful of people - regardless of their level of education or economic status - to assume that you know best what they need or should want. You may have information or an understanding of a larger situation that they don't, and passing that on to them is both reasonable and necessary.
What you don't have, however, unless you've experienced it (and even then, everyone 's experience is different, and everyone experiences the same things somewhat differently), is an understanding of how their lives and situations feel to them, and what they need as a result. The way to learn that is to ask, and to listen carefully to the answers.

The second reason for finding out what people think is that it will improve both your social marketing campaign itself and its chances of success. If you aim your campaign at the exact aspects of issues that matter most to members of the target group, and couch those issues in the terms that they themselves use, they are more apt to pay attention and take action.

Commercial marketers use just this strategy in trying to determine whether to go ahead with the development of a particular product. They conduct market research, including interviews, surveys, and focus groups (we'll discuss these later in this section, and there's more information in Chapter 3, Section 6: Conducting Focus Groups) and talk to consumers in other settings about their habits, their preferences, what they'd be willing to spend money on. If reactions are positive to the product they're planning, they'll proceed, but they'll also continue to check consumers' reactions to the product at every stage, changing it to make it more saleable. In the same way, you can use the information you gain from listening to the community to "market " beneficial social change.

- In college, the author was recruited for a focus group run by Gillette, maker of razors and shaving accessories. It was interested in trying out a beard-removing cream that would have made shaving unnecessary: you'd simply rub it on and wash it off every morning, and your beard would come with it. (Typically, this was not stated in the focus group, but it was obvious from the questions that the interviewer asked.)

  The reason that you've never seen this product is probably that most other focus groups reacted as negatively to the idea as mine did. Even though shaving is often an annoyance, no one in the group of college students liked the idea of simply wiping hair off his face. Shaving is a male ritual, and none of us was willing to give it up.

  In return for several hundred hours of interviewers' time and a few thousand bags of free samples, Gillette saved itself tens of millions of dollars in development and marketing money on a product that would have failed.

Who are the people to whom you need to listen?

The most important people to listen to are those whose attitudes or behavior you ultimately want to change. But who are they? There may be a number of different answers to that question.

A campaign to reduce and prevent youth violence, for instance, might involve a lot of different groups:

- The youth themselves, both those who commit violence and their victims (often the same people).
- Adults affected by - and often affecting - that violence: victims, parents and relatives of the youth involved, potential victims who live in fear, those who want to change the situation in their neighborhoods.
- Those who have professional contact with youth: agency staffs; teachers and other school employees; clergy; perhaps EMT's, emergency room physicians, and nurses who treat teenagers wounded or dying from gunshots.
- Police, probation officers, and others in the court system.
- Public officials and politicians who decry the violence and who make policy that affects it.

All of these folks may need to make changes in order to change the climate of youth violence in the community, and all have opinions that matter. That means that all of them - and perhaps others as well - need to be heard.
There are several ways you can go about identifying the people you need to talk to.

1. **Use your knowledge of the issue and the community.** You may already know whether particular groups or issues have particular geographic connections. There may be distinct ethnic neighborhoods in the community, for instance. Neighborhoods or areas of the community might be related to income levels, to air pollution, or to violent crime rates. Some areas might have a higher-than-normal occurrence of certain diseases, or of fatal car accidents. Certain areas might be dangerous to outsiders, or to members of racial groups other than those of the residents. Depending upon your issue, you may want to seek out residents of these or other areas.

   There may be connections among the issue and other factors. Particular diseases or physical conditions may be more common among some groups than others. (Black men are more likely to have high cholesterol than their white counterparts, for instance.) Some groups may be more at risk than others. (Homeless youth are prime targets of violence, for example, and, because they often use IV drugs and prostitute themselves, are at high risk for HIV infection.) The beliefs of some religious groups may make them distrust immunization. Immigrant groups may be blocked from services by language.

   There are also political and historical factors that your knowledge of the community may make apparent. You may need to listen to both sides of a long-standing conflict or misunderstanding before your campaign can go anywhere. You may need to understand the concerns of policy-makers who have to walk a tightrope between their own concerns about the issue and the opinions of their constituents... or vice-versa.

2. **Use publicly available government information.** Census data, annual town records, publications by such government entities as the Centers for Disease Control or the Department of Labor, local environmental impact statements, and the minutes of town boards can all contain valuable information about conditions and particular groups of people that might be important to your campaign.

3. **Read the latest research about your issue.** Time in the library and/or on the Internet will be well spent, whether it just confirms what you thought or whether it introduces you to new ideas or information. There may be a group you should be talking to that you never thought of, or there may be connections that you’d never imagined between members of your target group and other conditions. (That connection between black males and high cholesterol may not be common knowledge on the street, for instance.)

4. **Use information from the community itself.** There’s a host of information available from community leaders and observers, from the staffs of agencies and hospitals, from the business community (the Chamber of Commerce or even a local Small Business Development Center may have statistics about the workforce or about community buying habits), and from the newspaper and its archives. Using this and other community information, you can do some research of your own, and perhaps find connections or significant facts you didn’t know about.

5. **Look for indirect targets.** One of the things community informants can tell you is whether there are groups who aren’t themselves affected by the issue who nonetheless need to be included. It may be that members of a particular group won’t pay any attention to information from anyone but their clergy. If that’s the case, then you need to consult the clergy, as well as those whose behavior you’re hoping to affect.

   The real targets may be those causing the problem in some way: parents of teens with racist attitudes; the whole community, through its tolerance of domestic violence; corporations that promote harmful behavior for profit; politicians who fail to fund necessary programs, or who don’t understand the need for important services or policies. It’s important to find out what they think if you’re going to try to reach them.

   ✤ Sometimes the target of a social marketing campaign needs to be at more than one remove from those whose behavior the campaign is aimed at. Nestle and other
western companies for many years actually increased infant mortality by aggressively marketing baby formula to new mothers in the Third World, where nursing is much more likely to ensure babies' health and proper nutrition. The most effective means of changing this situation turned out to be a social marketing campaign directed at neither the mothers nor at Nestle. Rather, the campaign was directed at western consumers, asking them to boycott Nestle products. Eventually, Nestle was forced to agree to change its practices because of bad publicity and damage to its bottom line.

6. Consider how much of the potential target population you want to reach. You may be approaching only people from particular neighborhoods, ethnic groups or income levels. You may decide that you only have the resources to target teen smokers, rather than all smokers, or you may be addressing only unemployed women over 25. Those groups are the ones you need to approach in that case.

7. You may be aiming at the whole community, in order to raise awareness of or change community sentiment toward an issue, or to generate community support for or against a proposed law, action, or policy. In that instance, you can try to talk to groups that include a cross-section of the community (high school classes or workplaces, for instance) as well as a broad range of groups with specific characteristics (groups from ethnic neighborhoods, churches, organizations, recreational and service clubs, professional associations, street gangs, welfare recipients, etc.)

How do you contact those whose behavior matters?

Once you've determined whom you need to talk to, you have to let them know that you want to talk to them. Contacting target groups is a subject that is covered in several other sections of the Tool Box (Please see Chapter 6, Section 19: Handling Problems and Crises in Communication; Chapter 24, Section 7: Developing and Increasing Access to Health and Community Services; and Chapter 24, Section 13: Establishing an Adult Literacy Program, for discussions of community outreach). There are a few basic principles that are worth restating here, and a few others that relate specifically to contacting people in order to get their opinions.

1. Use language the target group understands. This means using its first language in the case of a minority language community, and clear, simple English elsewhere.

2. Put your message where the target group will get it. Make personal contact, put up posters, and hand out fliers in the neighborhoods you want to reach. Use community bulletin boards and post information in laundromats, supermarkets, and other places where people gather. Place public service ads in media outlets that your target group pays attention to (Hispanic radio stations, community newspapers, local access cable channels).

3. Know and respect the culture and customs of those you're trying to reach. Don't ask devout Muslims to come to meetings on Friday, or Orthodox Jews on Saturday, for instance.

4. Use trusted intermediaries. Start with the community people you know, or with the people who know everyone (clergy, for instance, may fill this role, as may neighborhood merchants or community activists). Not only do they have the contacts, but they are known by the community as well, and therefore more likely to be listened to.

5. Make as much personal contact as possible. The more people you talk to directly, the more response you'll ultimately get.

6. Let people know you're interested in what they think. Be clear that you're asking for their opinions, and that you'll use what they tell you.
How to listen to those whose behavior matters: market research

Learning how people will respond to a social marketing campaign - i.e. what kind of campaign is apt to actually bring about desired changes in behavior - is a bit more complicated than asking "So - what can we do to convince you to stop smoking?" Market research at this stage focuses on finding out from the "customers" themselves how they're likely to behave and why.

- Two issues should be mentioned before we look at how to carry out market research. First, if you’re a large or well-financed organization, you may have the money for formal market research. If you’re a smaller, grass roots organization without a lot of cash to spare, there are still ways to find out what the most effective approach might be, although they won’t give you information that’s as detailed as a formal research process. We’ll try to look at both possibilities in the discussion that follows.

- The second issue is that research of the kind described here is not the only source of information. Especially if you’re a small organization with roots in your community, you may know important things about your target population that a research process may not tell you: their dreams and aspirations, what’s deeply important to them, their emotional reactions, etc. Use what you already know, as well as what you find out.

What are some forms research can take?

Effective market research can be quantitative (expressed in numbers), qualitative (using description, observations, etc.), or both. Quantitative research gives you information that can be compared and analyzed easily; qualitative research often tells you more about the human beings involved. There are a number of different methods of research you can employ.

1. Use indirect sources. We’ve talked about using indirect information - census data, government information, etc. - to identify target populations, and we'll see it again in the next section on segmenting your market. If the right information sources are available, it can also be used to help understand a target population’s decision-making process and what they’ll respond to. Statistics on the percentage of households in a particular neighborhood that regularly recycle may hint at how responsive people in that neighborhood will be to arguments or advertisement based on environmental concerns. Consumer buying patterns might reveal that a certain group purchases lots of bicycles, sports equipment, home exercise machines, etc., which in turn can tell you something about that group’s attitudes toward health and fitness.

   The key here is finding sources that will give you information that’s useful for your purposes. You may have to spend a good deal of time in the library and on the Internet to find what you’re looking for... or to find that it doesn’t exist. Besides the census ([http://www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)), some good sources are the Centers for Disease Control ([http://www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)), the National Institutes of Health ([http://www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)), U.S. and state cabinet departments (Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, Interior, etc.), as well as state and city agencies. (There are links to virtually all government web sites, including those for all federal cabinet departments, at [http://www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov))

   Using indirect sources is one method that can make sense for smaller organizations. It won’t give you all the information you need, but it is inexpensive - staff time is the major expense - and careful analysis can give you some good ideas.

2. Conduct an ethnographic study. An ethnographic study is one in which researchers carefully observe a population. Originally, such studies were conducted by anthropologists to learn about other cultures, but now they’re used in a variety of circumstances.
There are essentially two ways to conduct an ethnographic study:

- **Non-participant observer.** The image many people have of an anthropologist is that of a non-participant observer. He doesn't join in any way in the life of the group he's observing, but simply watches and listens, taking notes, pictures, and/or videotape or speaking his impressions into a tape recorder. He may do this for months, or even years, trying to fit together the pieces of the culture to create a complete image of its functioning.

- **Participant observer.** A participant observer is just that. She participates in the culture she's observing, becoming part of it to the extent possible. She doesn't just watch, but asks questions, joins in ceremonies, and often becomes a true member of the group. She still takes notes and uses a tape recorder or video camera, but her presence is much more purposeful, and her interactions with group members more natural.

  - One of the first - and perhaps one of the most famous - participant observers was the anthropologist Margaret Mead. In doing the research for her book *Coming of Age in Samoa*, she became part of Samoan culture to the point that she married a Samoan man (and left him at the end of her stay). She was roundly criticized for this at the time, and anthropologists still debate both the accuracy of observations and the effect on the culture of participant observers.

  - The big issue here is whether, by becoming a presence in the group you’re observing, you change their behavior and influence their description of what they're doing and why they're doing it. While many anthropologists have come to believe that non-participant observation raises the same questions, some of the same issues pertain to market research.

  - How do you know that the folks you talk to will give you honest answers, and aren't just trying to please you or make themselves look good? Once you start asking people what they think or what their intentions are, instead of just watching how they react and what they do, you have to deal with the possibility of their intentional or unintentional dishonesty, as well as with changes in their thinking and circumstances over time.

Market researchers often use rapid ethnographic studies - immersing themselves in a particular situation (a mall, a beach, etc.) for a few hours or a day. They are very much participant observers - in fact, they decide on most of their questions beforehand. Researchers are often members of the groups being surveyed, so that they fit in, and their questions don’t seem obtrusive or unusual. As a result, they can get a lot of information in a short time.

  - A newspaper article profiled a young man in his mid-20's who has what he describes as a "dream job." He's a trend spotter for a New York-based market research firm, and his job consists of traveling around the Boston area to places where there are concentrations of adolescents and young adults, and conducting rapid ethnographic studies - usually a couple of hours - to find out what's in, what's out, and what's coming up. Carrying out much of his research in bars, in clubs, in malls, and in other places where young people are found, he just walks up to people and asks them questions. He chooses the young people he talks to by their style of dress, the way they carry themselves, and other factors that tell him they're trend-setters and initiators rather than followers. He himself was chosen at least partially because he's young, hip, and stylish.

A small organization often has a presence in the target population, and can ask questions of its members. An argument can be made, for instance, that any good street worker has to do an ethnographic study as a matter of course, just to learn enough to be accepted by the group he's
reaching out to. A study doesn't necessarily have to be conducted according to formal anthropological principles in order to be accurate, and to yield useful answers to marketing questions.

3. **Carry out depth interviews.** Depth interviews are intensive individual conversations with people. They can take place in people’s homes, or out of the home in malls, clinics, workplaces, or other places where the target population can be found. (The young man in the box above actually combines rapid ethnographic studies and depth interviews, depending upon who's available and the nature of the place.)

Depth interviews are particularly appropriate when the issue at hand is a sensitive one - birth control, obesity - and when you want individual responses, rather than a sense of the general thoughts of a larger group or a whole population.

4. **Convene focus groups.** A focus group is a group of 6-10 people, ideally strangers to one another, who are alike in some significant way or ways:

   - Demographics (age, gender, income, education, etc.)
   - Geography (Residents of the same or similar neighborhoods, rural areas, housing complexes)
   - Physical or other personal characteristics (disability, inherited disposition to particular conditions)
   - Psychographics (political views, religion, values, etc.)

The group is facilitated by someone both trained for the purpose and aware of the goal of the particular focus group. The point is to guide a discussion which gives the facilitator the desired information without members of the group knowing exactly what that information is. (The point of not revealing the true purpose of the group is to guard against the kind of dishonesty mentioned above. If people don’t know exactly what you’re getting at, they may be less likely to try to impress you or other group members, or to try to lead you astray.)

Focus groups have a number of advantages over other methods. They are less expensive than depth interviews, because they reach a number of people at the same time. They place participants in an informal, natural setting - a conversation rather than an interview - and the resulting discussion often brings out ideas that wouldn't have surfaced otherwise. People are also less on their guard in this situation, and a skillful facilitator can guide the group into areas they may not have explored individually, and get more honest responses than would be possible in a depth interview.

While a large organization with a marketing department will run focus groups according to the rules in a marketing textbook, smaller organizations can take advantage of this technique as well. If you know the questions you need answered, a good facilitator - a counselor or other human service person experienced in running groups, for instance - can steer a group to yield that information. Furthermore, already-existing groups can function as focus groups. The dynamic of the group changes somewhat in that situation, but having the information is still far more useful than not having it. Any community has numerous groups - service clubs, participants in programs, church groups, civic organizations - that are representative of parts of the community, and can be tapped in this way.

   - **A community college conducting a community assessment used already-formed groups at workplaces (members of a particular team on a particular shift), a medical center (members of a group of mothers with small children), an ethnic sports and social club, and an adult literacy tutoring program to gather information about needed services. The college based its offerings on the focus groups’ feedback, and found it was accurate. The classes were full, and there was a steady stream of potential students waiting.**

5. **Conducting surveys.** A survey can be oral or written, and can be aimed at either a particular group or a whole community. In its simplest form, it is a list of easily-answered (i.e. yes/no or multiple-choice) questions. It can be sent out in a direct mailing, distributed and collected in a public place, conducted by
phone or in person (again, in a public place or door-to-door), or some combination.

Surveys can be quite accurate and useful if they're carefully constructed, but they have some serious drawbacks. One is that, without some knowledge of statistics and of how to target a group of people that truly represents the population you want to question, it is difficult to know whether your results tell you what you want to know.

- Researchers of all kinds often try to construct a "representative sample," a group of people who represent exactly the larger population the researchers want to survey. Political and other opinion polls, for instance, may seem to tell you what everyone in the country thinks, but they're based on surveys of only a few thousand people, not 280 million. These few (usually three to five) thousand people are selected so that the percentages of different races, political parties, income levels, and other factors among them exactly mirror those in the country as a whole. The assumption is that their opinions will also mirror those of the country as a whole.

Another disadvantage is that direct mail returns of surveys and questionnaires are always small - the average is only about two to five percent, and 15 percent is large. Therefore, even if you mail the survey to everyone in town, you'll hear only from those who care enough about the issues to respond. The opinions of those who don't respond - by far the majority - may be totally different. The same holds true if you conduct the survey by phone or by stopping people on the street. Large polling organizations have the resources to call many more people than will respond, and also have the name recognition to make it likely that people will respond. Small organizations usually have neither, and therefore may find surveys less useful, unless the target population is quite limited.

**Determining what questions to ask**

Actually deciding on what you need to know isn't always easy. Alan Andreesen, in *Marketing Social Change*, suggests that the best method for coming up with the right market research questions is to work backward. The sequence follows this pattern:

1. **Identify the decisions that need to be made as a result of the research, and who will make them.**

   Some possible decisions:
   - Whether to run a social marketing campaign at all. If there are only a few people involved in the issue in question, there may be other ways to address them.
   - Whether to aim at only the target population, or at others who may have influence.
   - What kind of message to use.
   - How to frame the issue. Smoking cessation, for instance, can be seen as a matter of the smoker's health; her children's health; her children's concern for her health; an economic matter (a two-pack-a-day habit eats up a reasonable portion of a low-income budget); an esthetic concern (the smell of smoke on clothing, furniture, and breath, ashes on the rug); etc. What will grab the target population?

   - In a large organization, the decision-makers may be the board or the CEO, or even the marketing manager. In a small organization, it's likely to be the director or director and staff together. Since these are probably the same people who will both do the market research and implement the marketing campaign, it usually makes sense to work together to figure out what you need to know and create a research design to find it out.

2. **Determine what information the decision-makers need in order to design and run an effective campaign.** This is the most important step in designing research. What do you really want to know? In a social marketing campaign, it will essentially be the answer to the question "What will it take to get
people to change their behavior?", but that by itself won't help much. What you need is information relating to how people will actually behave:

- The decisions that people have to make in order to change their behavior
- What kind of information they need in order to make those decisions
- Who and/or what influences those decisions
- What kinds of messages the target population and those who influence them will respond to
- How ready they are to change
- What kinds of costs they'll trade for what kinds of benefits - what they actually want
- What kinds of messages they'll actually pay attention to

3. **Check with the decision-makers to make sure that what you've come up with is what they really need.** If you're a small organization, or if you're the decision-maker in a large organization, you can probably skip this step, because you'll already know the answer.

4. **Decide what kind of analysis you'll need to complete your study.** Create your research methods and design.
   - This step assumes a formal research study - Andreasen is a professor of Marketing, and looks at this area largely in terms of formal studies conducted by large non-profit corporations like museums, hospitals, or United Way. Formal studies are ideal, but the reality is that few small organizations have the resources to engage in them.
   - In a small organization, it's more likely that you'll analyze data informally. If you're analyzing numbers, you'll make educated guesses about what's significant (67% of smokers say they want to quit - that sounds like a population worth going after.) If you're analyzing what people say, you'll use your knowledge of the population and the community, as well as your intuition, to understand what it means. Your results may not be as reliable as those from a carefully-conducted formal study, but they'll give you a framework within which to work, and they'll be a great deal more useful than no information at all.
   - If you have some background in statistics - or if you can get someone, perhaps a graduate student, to help you - you may in fact may be able to perform some fairly complicated statistical procedures, using only a home computer, or even a statistical or scientific calculator. This will give you even more information, and may be able to point you in an unexpected or particularly fruitful direction.

5. **Determine the questions you need to ask to get the information you need.** How can you actually find out what you want to know? While a simple direct question can be valuable in many cases, often a direct question won't yield a real answer. People sometimes give the answers they think researchers want to hear, or the answers they wish were true, or answers that they think are accurate, but aren't. To get accurate information, you may have to approach it indirectly.

In addition, there are different ways to ask questions, even in an interview. Some possibilities:

- **Straightforward questions** (Do you want to stop smoking?)
- **Probes, or follow-up questions** (What exactly do you mean when you say...? Tell me more about that.)
- **Ratings** (On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all important, and 5 being very important, how do you rate these as health risks: Smoking, unprotected sex, swimming in a public pool, drug abuse, eating raw shellfish.)
Let’s look at the list of necessary pieces of information again, and formulate some possible questions for each item.

- **The decisions that people have to make in order to change their behavior.** Some decisions that may seem obvious may in fact be less so once you examine them. If you’re trying to convince people to take advantage of an intervention, for instance, even if they’re willing, they may have to make decisions about child care, or about changing other domestic arrangements (not being home to cook dinner). They might have to admit to a problem that has larger significance in their lives (The reason that I can't hold a job is that I can't read). To uncover those things, you might have to ask "What are the drawbacks to doing this?", "What would help you make the decision to do this?" or "What might be difficult about doing this?" and continue to probe the answers to those questions.

- **What kind of information they need in order to make those decisions.** To find out what information people need, you may have to ask what they know already, or what they'd like to know (harder, since people don't like to reveal ignorance), or what they'd like their kids to know (for something like smoking cessation or substance abuse treatment, or a medical program). Here, setting up a hypothetical situation might be helpful (Suppose your best friend got lung cancer from smoking. How would that change things for you?)

- **Who and/or what influences those decisions.** You might be able to discover who influences them by asking whom they admire, or who's important in their lives. You could also probe to find out whom people believe - family members, authority figures, community activists, friends, academics, etc.

  - The answers here might be surprising. Some people might be strongly influenced by their children's opinions, for instance, because of their kids' importance to them, and/or because of wanting to be good role models and be respected.

- **What kinds of messages the target population and those who influence them will respond to.** Here, you might show people examples of different kinds of messages - humorous, authoritative (4 out of 5 doctors recommend...), appealing to reason, etc. - and ask them to rate their effectiveness.

  - A series of TV ads intended to curb teen smoking, run by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, focused not on smoking's health aspects, but highlighted such issues as physical attractiveness (smoking makes your breath smell and gives you wrinkles), role modeling (your younger siblings will do what you do), and fitness for sports (smokers lose a step on the basketball court). Research had shown that most teens can't conceive of themselves as anything but young and healthy, but they can understand and respond to the other arguments. A health-based campaign wouldn't have been effective, but the actual campaign was.

- **How ready they are to change.** This is an extremely important issue. As we'll see in the next section, a whole campaign may be based on moving people to the next point in the scale of change rather than to the end point. Some questions here might include "Tell me what you know about this issue," rating the importance of the particular issue on a 1-5 or 1-10 scale, and "How confident are you that this will work for you?"

  - In Section 2 of this chapter, *Conducting a Social Marketing Campaign*, a six-step scale was proposed to describe people's positions, from complete lack of awareness
to having incorporated changes into their lives:

- Knowledge about the problem.
- Belief in the problem's importance.
- Desire to change.
- Belief in one's ability to change.
- Action.
- Ability to maintain the change.

Throughout this chapter, when we refer to people's readiness for change, we'll refer to this model.

- **What kinds of costs they'll trade for what kinds of benefits - what they actually want.** There are all kinds of costs associated with changing behavior. They may involve money (paying for medical services), time (giving up family or leisure time to participate in an intervention), emotional issues (a spouse's disapproval), social issues (giving up friendships based on shared behavior), logistics (finding a babysitter), or physical or psychological pain (physical therapy, quitting addictive drugs, dealing with your own responsibility for your problems). What do people need and want in order to be willing to pay these or other costs? Questions here might be asked in a series: "Would you attend a program if it were in another town? If you had to pay for it (and how much would you pay)? If it offered services in your home? If it offered child care?" But what you also need to ask is "What's the ideal outcome for you?"

  - When a car manufacturer or a drug company sets out to develop and market a new product, the first thing it wants to know is what people want. If people really want SUV's, then that's what the car company will make, and furthermore, it'll market them in the ways that speak to that desire. They'll advertise the vehicles as powerful, as tickets to freedom, as comfortable, as environmentally responsible (as bizarre as that may sound), as taking you to beautiful and inaccessible places - whatever people give as their reasons for considering buying a 4-wheel drive vehicle when they live in suburbia, and only drive to work and the movies and the supermarket, with occasional trips on the Interstate.

- **What forms of messages they'll actually pay attention to.** A last set of questions can tell you what forms of messages people will actually notice. Do they read print ads in newspapers? Do they remember and respond to TV commercials? Do they get most of their information from friends and relatives? Do they act on the information they get from their favorite radio station? "How do you decide what brand of orange juice to buy?" may be a question that will give you information on this issue. Others may be "Where do you mostly find out about what's happening in the world?" or "Where do you hear about new products or services?" A rating question may help here as well.

Once you've decided on the method or methods you'll use to conduct your research, and on the questions you need to answer, there's only one more step: do it! If you ask good questions of the folks whose behavior matters, and pay careful attention to the answers, you'll have the information you need to design a social marketing campaign that will lead to the results you hope for.

**To sum up**

Before you start a social marketing campaign, it's vital to understand what your target audience will respond to. The best way to find out is to ask them, and to listen closely to their answers.
Before you can ask them, you have to determine who they are. Some of the important people to listen to may not be those who are actually being asked to make changes, but those who influence them - family members, peers, professionals, etc. Once you know the people whose opinions you’re interested in, you need to contact them. You have to do that in language they understand, and in a place and medium where they ‘re likely to get the message.

Market research - in the form of secondary sources, ethnographic studies, depth interviews, focus groups, and surveys - will help you listen in structured ways to those whose behavior you’re hoping to affect. It will give you answers to the important questions about their behavior - what decisions they have to make in order to change, what information needs to inform those decisions, who or what influences their decisions, what kinds of messages they’ll respond to, their readiness to change, what kinds of costs they’ll trade for what kinds of benefits, and what form of message they ‘re likely to pay attention to.

Once you have that information, you’re ready to go on to create a campaign that will help to spur the changes you hope for.

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Resources

Print Resources

Internet Resources

http://www.cdc.gov The Centers for Disease Control.
http://www.groupsplus.com/ Numerous articles on focus groups and the focus group process from Groups Plus, a market research firm. Some of these are quite informative and helpful.
http://www.isixsigma.com/vc/focus_groups/ Articles on focus groups.
http://www.quirks.com Archived articles about all aspects of market research, including many from the non-profit sector, from the magazine Quirk’s Marketing Research Review.
http://www.researchinfo.com A number of free marketing resources. The best bet is probably the demo software.
http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk /sr/SRU19.html An article on focus groups from the Social Research Update, published by the Sociology Department at the University of Surrey, England.