Segmenting the Market to Reach the Targeted Population

Main Section
Contributed by Phil Rabinowitz Edited by Bill Berkowitz, Jerry Schultz

What is segmenting the market?
When might you segment the market?
How can you segment the market?

Suppose you’re trying to put together a social marketing campaign to reduce youth violence in your community. A lot of people are going to have to change their behavior for that to happen:

- Gang members and other youth who engage in violence are going to have to find other ways to settle disputes and to solve problems, and to choose to use them.
- Non-violent youth may need to learn to practice behaviors less likely to make them victims.
- Teachers, policemen, and others who deal with youth may have to change their approaches.
- Adults in general may have to pay more attention to young people.
- Community residents may have to make it a point to be on the streets more, especially at night.
- Parents may have to change the ways they discipline their children, or even change their own attitudes about violence, and their own violent or violence-accepting behavior.

In addition, some of these people may welcome the opportunity to change, and others may resist it. Others may not even be aware that youth violence is a community problem.

You might conduct your violence reduction campaign with a single message, delivered through a particular channel - let’s say a TV campaign.

But each of these groups may need a different approach to be convinced to change in ways that will affect the issue. Each of these groups is a different segment of the market. If you were selling them cars instead of promoting violence reduction, you’d do market research to find what each of them wanted in a vehicle (see Chapter 45, Section 3: Listening to Those Whose Behavior Matters, for more on market research), and then gear your ad campaign to convince them that they’d get it if they bought what you were selling.

You can segment the market in the same way for a social marketing campaign, making it more likely that your message will be heard. This section will help you understand what market segmentation is, why you’d want to use it, and how to make it work for you.

- Much of the literature on social marketing seems to assume that all social marketers are large organizations with access to big media outlets and professional-quality ad campaigns. This chapter of the Tool Box assumes that social marketing can be done on any number of levels, and that even small organizations with minimal budgets can use social marketing principles to achieve change in their communities.

- A successful social marketing campaign can be conducted by word of mouth and hand-drawn posters if it adheres to the principles repeated throughout Chapter 45: Social Marketing of Successful Components of the Initiative: customer-centeredness; change for the sake of the individual and community, rather than for the organization; clear behavioral goals based on the stated needs of those who are expected to change; pre-testing of messages; and willingness to adjust not just the
campaign but the substance of your services, service delivery, support, etc. to make change easier.

What is segmenting the market?

"Segmenting" is a marketing term for dividing up your audience into groups according to particular criteria. The members of each group have at least one important factor in common with the other members of the same group, and that factor sets them apart from all the other groups.

The criteria that you use to determine your groups should have some relationship to how they'll respond to your message. Segmenting will help determine how you deliver your message as well as its content.

If we return to the youth violence reduction campaign referred to in the introduction, we can see several ways the different segments we need to address could be separated. "Youth" might be broken down into gang members and non-gang members, for instance, or into under-16 and 16-and-over. Your segmenting choices would depend on how different the messages might need to be to reach particular groups.

Perhaps a message delivered by a popular hip-hop group would reach most youth in the community, regardless of gang affiliation or age. But it would take a very different message and messenger to reach business people or parents. Segmenting the market can help you make sure that your message is not only getting to everyone who needs to hear it, but increases the likelihood that they will listen to it.

Market segmenting enhances your ability to figure out the four P's of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. The different segments of your target population:

- need different products (e.g. need different services, or the same service delivered in different ways, or are interested in different benefits)
- are willing to pay different kinds of prices in time, money, or effort to make the behavior changes you're aiming for
- can be reached in different places (through different media outlets, or only through personal contact, or only through third parties)
- will respond to different types of promotion.

Segmenting your market helps to assure that everyone gets what he needs to support the process of change you hope he'll go through.

When might you segment the market?

The easiest and cheapest social marketing strategy is to blanket the target population with a single message. Segmenting the market takes some effort and resources, and designing a campaign that appeals to several segments takes a great deal more. When does it make sense to pay the price?

1. When you're concerned about a particular segment of the population because of the incidence or severity of a problem among its members, or because it may have fewer resources to advocate for or protect itself. Some examples:

- Young black men, especially in hard times, experience a far greater rate of unemployment than their white counterparts (high incidence).
- Even though the rate of breast cancer is similar for several groups, the death rate for one group is far higher than for the others (greater severity).
- The high-death-rate group in the example above may have no easy access to breast-cancer screening and no information about it (lack of resources).
2. When listening to the target population makes it obvious that it's composed of a number of different segments with different concerns and different ways of viewing the issue and the world.

3. When it's clear - from market research or simple common sense - that you'll need very different messages to reach different segments of the target population.

   ❖ Project Literacy US (PLUS), a mid-'80s cooperative effort among the federal government, ABC, PBS, and hundreds of local newspapers and radio stations, ran ads in the media to encourage the development of and enrollment in adult literacy programs. Media people quickly learned that ads emphasizing the scope and human cost of illiteracy as a problem attracted calls from volunteers who wanted to help. Ads featuring successful adult learners talking about how literacy had changed their lives attracted potential students.

4. When some segments of the target population are easily reachable and others aren't. It may require very innovative approaches to reach homeless people, for example.

5. When your organization has the resources and the capacity to tailor its marketing to different segments of the target audience. If you're running a media campaign, you'll need the money to pay for - and perhaps to create - several sets of ads and/or the time to spend placing newspaper stories. You'll need to have, or have access to, the expertise to understand what your campaign should look like, and to devise it. Even if your project involves delivering the same brochure in different languages, it may still require additional costs. And if your campaign is run as a public service by media and created pro bono by an ad agency or PR firm, you'll still have to spend a lot of time with those folks so they understand how to present your message.

   ❖ "Pro bono" means "for the good" in Latin, and refers to work done for free as a community service by businesses or professionals.

Whichever situation applies, organizational capacity is critical. The best-planned social marketing campaign can't be carried out without the proper resources of money, time, and staff. A well-planned campaign that fails because of the lack of these resources is just as futile - and looks just as bad - as a badly-conceived and badly-planned campaign. Only when you're sure of the ability of the organization to take on the costs necessary to be effective should you start looking at segmenting your market.

**How can you segment the market?**

Social marketers in general choose their segmenting criteria from one or more of five general categories: demographic, geographic, physical/personal history, psychographics (related to beliefs and values), and behavior.

1. **Demographic.** Demographic characteristics have to do with people's vital statistics, the sort of information you might get from census figures. You can find out how many of your target population fall into different demographic categories by checking the latest census data (You can get it in the library or on line at [http://www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)), your local town planning office, tax records, and other public documents. Some of the demographic categories you might look at are:

   - Gender
   - Age
   - Marital status
   - Family size
   - Ethnic/racial background
   - Income
   - Education
People may belong to two or more target groups, or a target group may include two or more characteristics. Some of the census tables in fact provide a look at how two or more characteristics (race, age, and income, for instance) overlap. There can be overlap as well among characteristics in all five of the criteria discussed here. You could be looking, for instance, for parents in a certain age group, living in a certain neighborhood, with particular attitudes toward authority, who don't know about a particular element of child nutrition.

2. Geographic. This one's simple: it refers to where people live. Often, that's an important factor in reaching a targeted group. Besides country, region (e.g. the Midwest), and state, there are some other geographic divisions you might use:

- Area (for example, upstate) or county
- Locality, if rural
  - Village names, for instance, often endure long after most of the village is little but foundation stones and cellar holes, or after it has become a thriving neighborhood in a larger community. These names are also often used to identify rural areas that are now thinly populated. Knowing them may be important to understanding who and where your target population is.
- City or town
- Area or neighborhood of a city or town
  - The area of Cambridge, Massachusetts between Massachusetts Ave. and the Charles River is called Cambridgeport, and Cambridge residents have always defined it that way. One neighborhood of Cambridgeport was still, in the 1950's and '60's, called "Greasy Village," because it had been in the path of the prevailing winds from a rendering plant. Greasy Village was a distinct neighborhood, with recognized boundaries and the loyalty of its residents.
- City block
  - In the past few years, because of advanced computer technology, it has become possible to prepare detailed maps of towns, neighborhoods, even city blocks that show where people with specific characteristics live. The geographic and demographic or other information are both entered into a specially configured computer system, and it produces a multi-color map that shows how the two sets of information coincide.

A GIS (Geographical Information System) map could show, by use of color, all the Hispanic households in a city, for instance, or all households with annual incomes over $60,000, or all Hispanic households with incomes over $60,000. Depending upon what you're looking for, a GIS map could make it easy for you to see what areas of a city or neighborhood to target with your specific message.

3. Physical/personal history. This category includes the physical and medical characteristics and personal experiences that groups of individuals have in common that may influence their responses to social marketing. Some of these include:

- Physical disability.
- Family history (including abuse, medical history, alcoholism, etc.)
Risk factors for diseases or for social conditions (Abused children are more likely than others to become abusive parents, for instance.)

Current physical and/or mental health status.

4. Psychographic. Psychographic characteristics are those that fill out demographic ones with people's lifestyles, beliefs, and values. Demographics may tell you about someone's income; psychographics tells you what she thinks the government should do with her taxes. Some psychographic characteristics that might interest a social marketer:

- Political views, including both party affiliation and the radical-liberal-centrist -conservative-rightist spectrum.
- Values and moral system.
- Social attitudes, touching on such issues as homosexuality, welfare, abortion, etc.
- Actual religious beliefs, as opposed to simply "being" Presbyterian or Islamic or Eastern Orthodox.
- Environmental awareness and attitudes.
- Health consciousness.
- Conceptions of parenting. These can range from neglect to over-protection, from permissiveness to authoritarianism, with infinite variations in between.
- Attitudes toward authority, from blind acceptance to outright hostility.
- Level of conformity.
- Attitudes toward education.

- A commercial marketer would be looking for very different psychographic characteristics than many of those above. Tastes in music and entertainment, what kinds of vehicles people prefer, what kinds of newspapers they read, attitudes toward sports, color preference - these are the kinds of things they might pay attention to.

Just as several of the characteristics in the list above - attitudes toward authority and level of conformity, for instance - could be important to commercial marketers as well, there may be some on a commercial marketer's list that could have an impact on your social marketing efforts. Don't write off anything until you've considered all its implications. How people get their news, who their heroes are, which public figures they consider believable, and, yes, their color preference (bright red posters might be more effective than bright green ones) might all turn out to be important information in a campaign to promote better prenatal care or curb domestic violence.

5. Behavior. For a commercial marketer, behavior means behavior in relation to the product she's trying to sell: brand loyalty, how people decide to buy a certain product (its price, its quality, its reliability, its brand name), how they'll use it, whether they've bought it before, how much they know about it, etc. For a social marketer, behavior also means behavior in relation to what you're interested in, but that translates into a somewhat different set of characteristics.

In Section 2 of this chapter, titled Conducting a Social Marketing Campaign, we talked about the range of understanding and action that a person might demonstrate in relation to the subject of a social marketing campaign. There, a six-stage model was proposed to describe people's positions, from complete lack of awareness to having incorporated changes into their lives:

- Knowledge about the problem. The first step is knowing that the problem exists. There has to be awareness before there can be any movement toward change. The level of someone's
knowledge may have a lot to do with whether or not he’s willing to think about changing his behavior.

- **Belief in the problem's importance.** Once people know about the problem, they have to believe there is a reason they should be concerned about it. That often means understanding how it applies to them personally.

- **Desire to change.** People have to decide that there’s a reason that they or the situation have to change. Many people, for instance, know that smoking is a health issue, and that it is important to individuals and society, but still aren’t ready to quit themselves.

- **Belief in one's ability to change.** Those reluctant smokers in the paragraph above have to believe they can quit before they’ll make an effort to do so.

- **Action.** At this point, individuals have resolved the previous four issues, and are ready and able to do something about the problem.

- **Ability to maintain the change.** Once someone's taken the appropriate action, it's still not all over. If the action was personal - quitting smoking, for instance - that action has to be maintained over time to be effective. Quitting for a week isn't enough: quitting for a lifetime is the goal. That means consciously not smoking every minute of every hour of every day until not smoking becomes as unconscious and familiar as smoking once was. Even then, it's important to be aware of temptation, and to be able to resist old impulses.

Understanding where people are on this scale is among the most important factors in deciding when and how to segment your market. Aiming your message at a segment that’s defined by its willingness to consider changing behavior toward the issue may be the most effective way to approach that change.

Some other issues to consider in developing a social marketing campaign are:

- **Concern with cost.** How much is your target population willing to pay? Can you reduce the costs to make change more attractive? As discussed in Section 2 of this chapter, there are costs for changing behavior and attitudes. Sometimes they’re financial (paying to recycle, for instance, or adding regular dental care to your medical bill for the year), sometimes they’re measured in work (packing up that recycling, doing GED homework, getting extra exercise), sometimes they involve time (taking evenings away from the family to participate in a program, giving up several hours of leisure time to volunteer each week), and sometimes they’re psychological (facing your embarrassment and fear of failure in order to enroll in an adult literacy course).

For more on the issue of costs, see Chapter 45, Section 6: Promoting Behavior Changes by Making It Easier and More Rewarding: Benefits and Costs.

- **Willingness to take risks.** Is there a segment of the target group that's more likely to be willing to take the risks of change? Can they lead the way for others? Are there some who are really reluctant? Can you reach them, or are they so unwilling to risk it that they’re not worth targeting?

  - Everett Rogers, in Diffusion of Innovations, looks at those who are among the leaders in adopting new ideas, techniques, or products. Not surprisingly, he finds that they tend to be less conventional, more widely knowledgeable, more willing to take risks, and more independent than those who are less eager to try new things.

These innovators essentially try out new things for others, and, if the use of those things is successful, ultimately lead others to adopt them. It may make sense in some social marketing circumstances to appeal particularly to innovators, who will then act as opinion leaders in the long run.

- **Degree to which they're influenced by friends and others.** Will some segment of the target group do almost anything if enough of their friends are doing it? Or, conversely, will some never do anything until at least some people they know are already doing it?
Motivation by reason, as opposed to emotions or fears or impulses. Everyone acts irrationally at least some of the time, but is that the rule for some segments of the population? Are some likely to be swayed by logical arguments, while others can only be appealed to on some other level?

Different segments of the target audience may have different levels of involvement in and knowledge about the issue, may have different attitudes toward it, and may respond to different kinds of arguments and information about it. As a social marketer, you can reach each of these segments - or each of the ones most important to your campaign - by aiming your message specifically at it, using what you know about it.

6. Third parties. In addition to these five touchstones of commercial market segmenting, social marketing often requires another. Particular target groups, or many members of those groups, may not be influenced directly by a social marketing campaign. They may be much more likely to listen to family members, doctors, neighbors, etc. If that's the case, then you need to target those third parties rather than those whose behavior you're hoping to change.

- Sometimes the target of a social marketing campaign has to be at more than one remove from the beneficiaries to be effective. Several years ago, a campaign was started to prevent Nestle and other western companies from aggressively pushing Third World families to switch from nursing to baby formula. Because of the protective qualities of mother's milk and the lack of clean water with which to prepare formula, this practice - touted to the parents as safer and more hygienic than nursing - actually increased infant mortality.

Ultimately, activists found that neither the families themselves nor Nestle was the most effective target for their campaign. Instead, they asked western consumers to boycott Nestle products in protest of its Third World practices. Stung by the damage to its bottom line and the wash of negative public opinion, Nestle eventually agreed to cease marketing formula in the Third World.

But how do you decide which of all these criteria to use to define segments of your population? As explained above, there are numerous ways that a community or a group can be segmented by using and combining criteria. Given all the different choices, how do you divide your audience into segments that will be helpful to you in a social marketing campaign?

The answer is in the target audience itself. As with all social marketing, segmenting needs to be focused on the people whose behavior needs to change if the campaign is to be successful.

Deciding which segments to focus on

Once you've defined segments, you have to determine what your targets will actually be. As always in social marketing, the best answer is to turn to the "consumers" themselves, i.e. those people whose behavior you want to change. If you examine who needs to change, whose changes can be most helpful to your campaign, and what their stances are on change, you'll have a pretty good idea whom to target. There are some formal criteria to help you make that decision.

Once commercial marketers have segmented their audience, they use four basic criteria to decide which segments to target: measurability, accessibility, substantiality, and actionability.

1. Measurability. For a commercial marketer, this is the ability to determine whether a particular segment is large enough and has enough purchasing power to be worth pursuing. For you, it's whether change in a particular segment of the population will have a significant effect on the issue you're addressing. If your goal is to make sure that all five-year-olds in the community have had a full range of immunizations, for instance, you know you want to target their parents. But what about their grandparents or older siblings? Can you determine whether there are there enough of them, and whether they're important enough in influencing parents' decisions to make targeting them worthwhile?
2. **Accessibility.** Can you reach a particular segment with your message? If immunization is rare in a particular language minority community, but you have no "in's" to that community, and no one available who speaks its language, that segment is not accessible, as things stand. By the same token, a neighborhood whose residents mistrust outsiders and pay very little attention to any information that doesn't come directly from people they know is also less than accessible.

- **Accessibility is a matter of degree.** A commercial marketer may not care if a particular segment becomes part of his customer base or not, as long as his bottom line is healthy. A social marketer may have very different feelings about a particular segment of the population, and may be willing to spend vast amounts of time to develop accessibility to that segment. Cultivating personal contacts, learning the language and culture, and spending time in the community are some of the ways that you might create access to a particular segment. They all take time, but may be worth it if that segment is important to your goals.

3. **Substantiality.** Is the segment large enough and likely to yield enough of a return to be worth targeting? Developing a social marketing campaign around immunization may not be worth it if only a few families have failed to immunize their children. It would make much more sense in that case to spread your message by personal contact.

4. **Actionability.** The segment has to have characteristics that are distinct enough to make it possible to target a campaign specifically to it. "Parents of children under five" may not be distinct enough for a social marketing campaign to encourage immunization. You may have to target separately to teen parents, single mothers, families without health insurance, families whose locations make it difficult to get to a clinic, etc.

Besides these four basic criteria for segmenting an audience, it's important to include one other:

5. **Position on the change scale.** As described above, segments can be defined by their position on the scale of change, from lack of knowledge about the problem to maintaining the new behavior. This position, according to Alan Andreasen in *Marketing Social Change*, is the single most important criterion for segmenting your market.

People need to know about and understand the issue before they can even begin to think about acting on it. Once they know about it, they have to be convinced of its relevance to their own situation, of the benefits of changing their behavior, of the possibility of change, etc. Each stage requires a different approach to move people to the next stage of the process... and moving them to the next stage is the proper goal, rather than trying to get them all the way to the end in one effort. Research seems to show that by tailoring the marketing message to the appropriate stage of the change process, social marketers are most likely to get behavioral results in the long run.

### Addressing the targeted segments

Once you've decided whom you want to target, what's next? The first step is to consider what kind of social marketing campaign you want to conduct. Commercial marketers usually see themselves as having three choices, depending upon their needs and resources: undifferentiated marketing, differentiated marketing, and concentrated marketing.

1. **Undifferentiated marketing** is the practice of developing one message aimed in the same way at everyone you want to reach. In the early days of TV, particularly, most commercial campaigns were run this way. A single ad, or a series of similar ads - often humorous - would saturate the airwaves for weeks or months: Speedy Alka-Selzer, the Ajax Cleanser jingle, and "See the USA in your Chevrolet" are all familiar to those who watched TV in the '50's and early '60's. They permeated everyone's consciousness, and created an enormous awareness of the products they advertised.

That's the up side. The disadvantages of an undifferentiated campaign lie in trying to create a message
and presentation that will speak to everyone on some level. That's difficult even when the members of your target audience are all similar in some way: teen mothers, or gay men, or unemployed adults. When the audience is diverse, the difficulties mount. What white youth will respond to may be very different from what older black people will. Democratic apartment-dwellers may have reactions opposite to those of Republican homeowners.

In addition, an undifferentiated message is usually pretty general: support this issue; do this, don't do that. The subtleties of the message are lost ("This is your brain on drugs." All drugs? Over-the-counter drugs? The first time you use them?), as are the differences between what you might want one segment to do (Don't start using drugs), as opposed to another (Talk to your kids about the real dangers of using drugs).

The great advantage of undifferentiated marketing is that it's inexpensive, in both time and money. If you're short on resources, it may be your only logical choice. Your message gets to a broad range of people with a minimum of fuss. When you're trying to raise the awareness of the whole community about an important issue, it may be the best way to spread the word.

Conducting an undifferentiated marketing campaign could mean you're not segmenting the market at all (your target is "everyone"), but it doesn't necessarily. You could pinpoint certain segments you want to reach, then conduct an undifferentiated campaign aimed at all those segments. Your target audience, for instance could be "people at risk of contracting HIV," which might include segments as diverse as IV drug users, affluent sports figures, gay men, sexually active teens, and prostitutes.

2. A differentiated marketing campaign separates out those segments it actually wants or needs to reach (the groups included in "people at risk of contracting HIV," for instance.) Then it designs a message and presentation specifically for each segment.

Once again, this type of campaign has some disadvantages. First, it can be complex, especially if you're trying to reach a large number of segments. You have to come up with a tailored message for each group, one that is not only aimed at helping that group understand what and why it should change, but one that its members actually respond to.

It's not just a matter of whom you aim at, but whether you hit them or not. Many ads aimed at teens, for instance, are useless because they're conceived by 45-year-olds who seem to have no memory of what it was like to be 15, and whose conception of teen language and behavior is formed by images in the media - usually created by other 45-year-olds - rather than by listening to real kids.

Some adults respond to images of authority figures - doctors, lawyers, teachers - while others view them with hostility or consider them silly in the context of a marketing campaign. Some people respond to real-life experience - e.g., the older woman who once modeled for cigarette ads, and who has lost her larynx to smoking-related cancer. Some respond simply to reason: if statistics say that people who exercise regularly live an average of five better-quality years longer than those who don't, then it makes sense to exercise. In order to be effective at differentiated marketing, you have to have a clear idea of what your target segments find compelling.

Differentiated marketing can be very expensive, both in time and effort and in money. In addition to the energy needed to create a different message and presentation for each segment, there are the costs of producing and distributing all these different messages. Even if the campaign is a local one, involving mostly volunteer labor and ideas, it will require a serious investment of resources.

On the other hand, differentiated marketing, if done well, can be extremely effective at reaching exactly the groups you want to reach, and motivating them to make the changes you're working toward.

If you're planning a differentiated marketing campaign, organizational capacity is a
big factor. In general, according to Nedra Kline Weinreich, in Hands-On Social Marketing, a small organization shouldn't try to handle more than three segments at a time. If your resources are limited, you're apt to get better results overall if you target just one.

3. **Concentrated marketing**, as the name implies, concentrates on the single segment, or very small number of segments that include those most crucial to the campaign's effort. Rather than all of those at risk for HIV, for instance, it might target only those at the greatest and most immediate risk (IV drug users, perhaps).

Deciding whom to target in a concentrated campaign depends upon what the goal is. If you're trying to change perceptions in the community, you might target those who are most influential. If you're trying to deal with the spread of a problem, you might want to target those who are most ready and most likely to change their behavior as a result of the campaign. If you're trying to turn around a bad situation, you might aim at those most immediately affected by the issue at hand. Yet another way to choose a segment is to target those who might be most susceptible to the campaign, regardless of their readiness or how severely they're affected by the issue.

Concentrated marketing has the disadvantage of ignoring many segments that may be affected by the issue or may be helpful in bringing about the desired changes in the community. It chooses to cover one small piece of the total market extremely well, but at the expense of ignoring a large portion of the community.

If you have limited resources, however, or if there are only one, or very few segments that need to be reached, concentrated marketing may be an excellent strategy.

**Other considerations**

If your audience includes both teens and middle-aged business people, it's probably pretty obvious that you wouldn't use the same message, or at least the same form of message, for both of them. For the former, you might choose to emphasize what their peers are doing, and - if you're using the media - present the message in a rapidly changing rock video format. For the latter, you might appeal to practical or economic reasons for change, and have those reasons presented straightforwardly by a professional-looking person in a suit (or, better yet, by Alan Greenspan).

Some other kinds of division also require different kinds and/or forms of messages. Some of the segments to think about include:

- **Education and social class.** In our supposedly classless society, these are almost the same. People who grew up as lower or working class become middle class almost automatically if they graduate from college. Even if they work at blue-collar jobs, they retain a different sensibility than those with no college background, and are apt to respond to different kinds of messages.
  - The key in all of this is to choose a message and a medium that's comfortable for the segment you're aiming at. What's familiar or obvious to one group - rap music, for instance - may be confusing, or even offensive, to another.

- **Language.** If different segments speak different languages, or speak in different slang, they need to hear your message in the language in which they're most comfortable, or in straightforward standard English that they can all understand.

- **Culture.** Different cultures may dictate different messages, even if their languages are the same. The message and its presentation have to conform to the expectations of the culture if you expect people to hear it.

- **Offensiveness.** Some people judge a movie, for instance, on whether or not the people in it swear a lot, or whether it includes sex scenes. The nuances of plot and character are lost in their outrage over particular words or actions. Comprehensive family planning, involving birth control and the possibility of abortion, can be seen by devout Catholics and Orthodox Jews as insulting
to their religious beliefs.

- **Levels of awareness.** Those who are sophisticated about the issue may find a simple approach insulting, or may ignore it as obvious. By the same token, those who know little about the issue can be confused and alienated by complicated explanations or arguments.

- **Levels of affluence.** You may want to ask more affluent people for contributions, while you pitch a message requesting volunteer time or help in spreading the word to those who have less money to offer.

- **The interest of the target audience in heeding your message.** If you're asking your audience to make some specific change in attitude or behavior, they need to understand why it will be in their interest to do so. If they're to be catalysts for change in others, why should they be? Doctors, for instance, may not need convincing that it's in their and the public interest to urge patients to adopt healthy lifestyle habits. Politicians, on the other hand, may not have a vested interest in improving constituents' lifestyles, unless they see those constituents as powerful allies, or unless they can do it in a short enough time so that it will help them get reelected.

As with all of social marketing, the best practice is to start with those whose behavior you want to change. If you listen carefully to their needs, wants, and opinions, and pretest messages with them, you are likely to be able to choose the right segments and devise a campaign aimed at those segments that gets results.

**To sum up**

An important part of a social marketing campaign is segmenting your market, i.e. dividing it into coherent groups, each of which might respond to a different approach. Creating an approach for each segment of your target audience will make it more likely that your message will be heard and followed.

Commercial marketers use four standard sets of characteristics for segmenting the market: demographic (vital statistics - gender, age, income, education, etc.), geographic (where people live), psychographic (beliefs, values, tastes, opinions), and behavior. Once you've identified market segments using these characteristics, you can determine whether particular segments are worth targeting by looking at four criteria:

- **Measurability:** whether you can determine that a segment is large and important enough to your issue to be worth pursuing.

- **Accessibility:** whether you can reach a segment with your message and with whatever else is necessary to achieve your purpose.

- **Substantiality:** whether the segment is in fact large and important enough to the issue to target.

- **Actionability:** whether the segment is distinct enough to be targetable (i.e. does it have characteristics that set it apart enough so that a message and approach can be designed specifically for it).

After you've decided which segments are worth targeting, you can pick an undifferentiated, a differentiated, or a concentrated marketing approach to make the best use of your available resources and to reach as much of the target audience as you can.

Careful segmentation of your market will increase the chances of your social marketing campaign's success.

*We encourage the reproduction of this material, but ask that you credit the Community Tool Box: [http://ctb.ku.edu](http://ctb.ku.edu)*
Resources

Print resources


Internet resources


http://www.sric-bi.com/VALS/types.shtml Explanation of the VALS (values and lifestyles) system of identifying market segments.

