

Communication Campaign - A Major Tool of Social Marketing Prince George Campaigns

The Historical and Social Roots of Social Marketing

Much of what capitalist social marketing does now was taken from social justice activists originally. Historically, activists have attempted to reach out with information designed to change behaviors for positive community well being. Capitalism however, has narrowed the focus to selling a particular product, or changing buying habits or to controlling the products that people buy.

In traditional marketing there are 4 P's; promotion of a product including focus on price and place. The major emphasis is on knowing the target market. There has been a tendency to use manipulation and seduction of mass marketing techniques to play on the insecurities, fears and guilt of this target market (people) in order to purchase products they don't really need. We believe that the task of community developers such as ourselves here at the Prince George FAS Network is to reclaim the concepts of social marketing for positive use in our work towards eliminating FAS. In the words of Eric Young "as long as there have been social systems there have been attempts to inform, persuade, influence, motivate; to gain acceptance for or new adherents to, new ideas; to promote causes, and win over particular groups, to reinforce behavior or to change it..." ([*Social Marketing: Where it Comes From, Where it's Going*](#)).

Social Marketing adds 4 other P's to the traditional formula. Policy, practice, politics and partnership create dimensions in social marketing, which allow community developers to promote healthy life enhancing changes and improvements. The social problems that social marketing address have systemic, multifaceted roots. Social marketing allows the creation of multi-faceted approaches to developing solutions. The greatest strength of this marketing is that the need to understand the "audience" makes us face the issue in its entirety. No matter how good the communication or how powerful our evidence it means nothing if we do not learn to communicate it in a way the makes sense to people, in their lives, in their culture and in their language.

Communication Campaigns are one component of this social marketing approach, which further politicizes the concept of health promotions and illness prevention. The definition of a communication campaign is a process that is organized, planned and co-ordinated to create activities designed to convey information to "audiences" in ways that effectively and respectfully offer choices and options that are affordable and workable within the culture of the people being addressed.

A good communication campaign requires a strong organizational commitment, a knowledgeable and informed group of members and a commitment to the resources, energy and decisions needed. A good campaign must reflect well thought out decisions which have been arrived at collaboratively within the project as a whole.

Our "first steps" in a Prince George FAS Communication Campaign

The initial Communication Campaign that Prince George embarked upon in 1991, was the passing of a city by-law to ensure signage in all places where alcohol is consumed or sold. Essentially this bylaw, enforced under the Municipal Act, was an attempt to "regulate persons, their premises, and their activities to further the care, protection, promotion and preservation of the health of the inhabitants of the city". In keeping with the attitude of the times, the signage was geared to making the pregnant women solely responsible for the consumption of alcohol. Signage was only required in the women's washrooms not the men's and the message itself was directed, with a fearful tone, at the

damage the mother could do. We have since discovered that these forms of scare tactics are not as effective as messages which encourage knowledge, use of good judgment, shared responsibility and empowerment to change. Blaming women as morally irresponsible and wilfully neglectful is known by those of us who use women-centered principles, to be both damaging to the woman and her sense of esteem and to the responsibility that the community has in supporting women to make healthier choices.

The following is a copy of what the signage reads and what is still being used as a signage in our community.

BEWARE:

**DRINKING
Beer, Wine, Coolers,
and any alcohol
DURING PREGNANCY
CAN CAUSE
BIRTH DEFECTS**

BYLAW NO. 5705 City of Prince George

The community of Burns Lake, 220 kms west of Prince George, passed a similar By-Law in March of 1996. Their wording reads:

**Pregnancy & Alcohol
DO NOT MIX
Drinking alcohol, including
Wine, coolers and beer during pregnancy
Can cause birth defects**

Village of Burns Lake Bylaw # 702

Both by-laws required the "conspicuous display" of at least one sign in both off sales locations and on-site liquor consumption premises. Burns Lake's by-law however requires a further posting of signage in Provincial government liquor outlets.

While we recognize that Prince George was the first city to adopt such signage we have plans to further this approach with first, a wording which is more consistent with a population health approach and less woman blaming and second, signage which is required to be posted in areas such as other liquor outlets, men's washrooms and other r public areas.

If you believe that signage is an effective means of communicating a desired behavior for your community then consideration should be given to your community adopting similar signage. We encourage you however to look at a population health message with a more proactive approach to

changing health oriented behaviors.

We have experimented with a few different types of wording, which are more "upstream" and population health oriented. Here is one example. Note the tone and perhaps your different reaction to this message.

Healthy Communities
Empower women
and their partners to
avoid alcohol during pregnancy.

Our Next steps in the Communication Campaign

We held two separate training sessions one year apart. During these sessions we trained any Network members who were interested and did strategic planning for further communication campaigns.

The initial workshop did not stress the importance of prevention from a population health perspective. The second however presented the material based on a strong "upstream" approach. The outcome of both workshops were very different. The first workshop primarily focused on the pregnant woman, however the second workshop focused on the antecedents of the issue and as a result a campaign was devised that was focused to a general community audience simply promoting an awareness of FAS as a community problem with a community solution. The slogan "Now that we know that FASD is...." was developed and local personalities were featured as a means of normalizing the need to understand more.

The strengths in our work were in the population health approach and in the creative energy that people invested in developing ideas for action. The areas of learning we need to address included the lack of money to follow through with these ideas and the ability to keep the momentum of that energy moving towards our goals. (Translated that says we had big ideas but little money to follow through.) Both campaigns were important developmental steps in attaining our goal of changed behavior.

Next we will have to evaluate the campaigns effectiveness overall in changing how the community views FAS and in whether behaviors around drinking and pregnancy have changed.

There are a number of great web site that provide tutorials and presentation packages for use with non-profit groups. Try www.social-marketing.com or www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/socialmarketing to get you started.