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The Social Marketing Solution

“I imagine a future in which the random chance of where a child is born doesn’t determine her odds of being happy and successful. I envision a different world in which suffering isn’t automatically the lot of billions of people.”

—Melinda Gates¹

Consider the impact we would have on the number of people in poverty in various parts of the world if we could support and persuade more people to get immunized on time, put mosquito nets over their beds, take their tuberculosis medicines, use condoms, reduce saturated fats in their diets, quit smoking, breastfeed for six months, get screened for cancer, say no to drugs, use alcohol only in moderation, purify their water, access services for the homeless, and wash their hands often, for as long as it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice.

What would it mean if we were also successful in influencing more children to be prepared for their first year in school, and more teens to finish high school and then go on to college, to then get and keep a job, live within their means, and be prepared when bringing a child into the world?

What difference would it make if we had more volunteer tutors, mentors, and informed voters, and were better prepared as communities for natural disasters? And then picture, most importantly, perhaps, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, philanthropists,

and corporations providing integrated support to make these behaviors more affordable, popular, and easy—everywhere in the world.

This is in fact is what social marketers do every day, around the world, as they *influence behaviors for good*.

What Is Involved in Trying to Change Someone's Behavior?

Many positive behaviors are not adopted for a variety of reasons. Some current behaviors are addictive and take a strong will to change. Some behaviors are spontaneous and repeated without much thought or educated concern. Some behavior changes involve costs or unpleasant efforts. Some lack a system or persons who will support or facilitate the behavior.

The purpose of social marketing is to develop constructive approaches to support desired behavior changes. The basic principle is to increase the audience's perception that the benefits of the new behavior outweigh the costs of adopting it. The new behavior must be seen as having higher value than the current behavior. For example, to get someone to consider giving up smoking, there are two broad approaches:

- Increase the perception of the benefits of the desired behavior (such as by emphasizing to young people how their breathing is better when they engage in sports and give up smoking)
- Increase the costs of the undesirable behavior (such as by raising the tax on cigarettes)

Social marketers, like their counterparts in commercial marketing, use the four Ps—product, price, place, and promotion—to encourage purchase or adoption of behaviors. They improve the attractiveness of the behavior and sometimes offer goods or services to support the behavior (product). They alter the price or cost of one behavior versus another (price). They make it easier to move into the

new behavior (place). They promote the short-term and long-term benefits of the new behavior (promotion).

Commercial marketing, which has been so effective in getting people to improve their material life, uses a set of principles and practices that can be applied effectively in the social realm, as illustrated by the following scenario.

Picture a village in India that experiences a sudden outbreak of influenza. Suppose a vaccine exists that can stop the flu epidemic from spreading, especially if everyone in the village would show up and be vaccinated when the truck arrives with the vaccine. It is important to get 100% turnout for the vaccine. *The number of people in the village who show up for the vaccine will depend on the intensity of the marketing campaign.* Consider these possible levels of the marketing campaign, from weak to strong:

- Only send a marketing agent to visit each family and announce the day of the vaccination.
- Add to this: The agent asks if anyone in the family (such as a disabled person) will need help on that day to get to the site of the mass vaccination.
- Add to this: The agent describes to the family the strong benefits of getting the vaccination or the possible harm of catching the disease.
- Add to this: The agent mentions that there will be entertainment at the site of the vaccination.
- Add to this: The agent mentions that free food will be supplied at the site.
- Add to this: The agent mentions that each person who receives a vaccination will receive a gift (such as a transistor radio or some other item that has been donated by a corporate partner).

If the agent follows only the first step, chances are most of the villagers won't show up. Pure information rarely carries a motivational charge. Offering to help all the family members attend—children, the elderly, and the disabled—improves the turnout. Helping villagers vividly recognize the benefits of the vaccination will increase

their intention to show up. Offering entertainment at the site will improve attendance, as will free food. Finally, if it is absolutely critical to get 100% turnout, it might also be important to give each person some gift they would find appealing.

Even this approach is only a limited marketing view of what it takes to draw a large turnout of people for a vaccination. It has the character of a “mass marketing” approach, as opposed to a “target marketing” approach. The agent has chosen to attract everyone with a similar package of benefits, assistance, entertainment, and gifts. But some villagers will not be persuaded by any of these inducements. People also differ in their readiness and willingness to respond. Some villagers may be against vaccinations, believing that vaccinations go against their religion. Other villagers may believe the vaccinations will be painful or ineffective. People carry different perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs that affect their behavior. Understanding this, a sophisticated marketing agent would not have developed his vaccination plan until he had interviewed people in the village and talked to the tribal leader to see what beliefs would facilitate the project and what beliefs would hinder it. And they may then employ different strategies with different segments.

Even this segmenting and targeting scenario is too limited a view of a sound social marketing approach. Our campaign describes only *downstream* social marketing—planning to change the behavior of the target “consumers.” But *upstream* social marketing work also must be done, to alter the impact of larger factors and forces that will affect the campaign’s success. Here are some examples connected with successfully vaccinating all the persons in a village:

- The marketing agent has to raise money to pay for the vaccines, instruments, facilities, marketing research, and promotion of the event. This calls for a market analysis of possible sources of funds—perhaps a government agency, donor companies, or nongovernment organizations (NGOs). The marketer may want to set up a vaccination campaign fundraising unit that

identifies, visits, and solicits support from specific organizations and individuals who are likely to contribute.

- The marketing agent has to find a site where the vaccinations and activities can take place. Its location must be easily accessible. The agent may have to convince a specific farmer who has a large, empty field to make it available for that day.
- The marketing agent may have to contact an insurance company to gain favorable terms to cover any villagers who are hurt by the vaccinations or activities of that day.

Social marketing relies on understanding the target audience's needs, wants, perceptions, preferences, values, and barriers and turning this understanding into an effective plan to achieve the desired behavior outcomes, upstream as well as downstream. Without this understanding, many poverty workers with the best of intentions fail to achieve their objectives in reducing poverty. Simply telling someone that a new behavior would be good for him or her is not enough. Every cigarette package contains a warning that smoking is harmful to your health. We know that this is not enough. Social marketing supplies the steps usually missing in otherwise well-intentioned social betterment efforts.

What Is Social Marketing?²

Social marketing is a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value in order to influence target audience behaviors that benefit society (public health, safety, the environment, and communities) as well as the target audience.³

Social marketing has made enormous strides since its founding in the early 1970s. It has had a profound positive impact on social issues such as family planning, tobacco usage, drunkenness, teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, immunizations, skin cancer, and literacy. Scores of social

marketing campaigns deal with problems in industrial societies, such as obesity, lack of exercise, eating disorders, drinking and driving, seatbelts, gun storage, water conservation, litter, and energy conservation.

Social marketing as a term, however, is misunderstood or misused by many. There are several common misunderstandings to clear up:

- Don't confuse social marketing with social advertising. We have all seen well-meaning public campaigns for putting out campfires ("Smokey Bear"), getting a good education ("Go to college"), and not using drugs ("Just say no to drugs"). Social advertising is an important tool of social marketing. But social marketing goes well beyond simply promoting a cause. In fact, promoting the cause is the last step in developing a full social marketing campaign.
- Assure your colleagues, elected officials, and funders that social marketing is not another term for manipulation and hard-selling. In fact, it is just the opposite, as it is rarely successful without a customer-driven, customer-sensitive approach.
- Understand that the term "social marketing" is not the same as "social networking" or "social media," although these are promotional tactics that social marketers may use.
- Know that a social marketing strategy may include providing subsidies for products such as mosquito nets and HIV drugs. But providing subsidies for products is not social marketing.

What Poverty-Related Issues Can Benefit from Social Marketing?

Table 3.1 presents 30 major poverty-related issues that can benefit from the application of social marketing principles and techniques. It is only a partial list, but it represents the major poverty causal factors that might be supported by social marketing efforts. Examples of downstream behaviors that contribute to alleviating the issue are also presented.

TABLE 3.1 Thirty Poverty-Related Issues That Social Marketing Can Impact Increasing Resilience to Economic Hardship and Decreasing Vulnerability to Poverty

Poverty-Related Issues That Social Marketing Might Help	One Behavior That Might Be Chosen for a Social Marketing Effort	
Health	HIV/AIDS	Use condoms.
	Tuberculosis	Take all prescribed drugs as directed.
	Malaria	Put a mosquito net over the bed.
	Cancer	Have screenings for breast, prostate, and colon cancers.
	Heart disease	Engage in regular physical activity.
	Polio	Agree to have children inoculated.
	Nutrition	Breastfeed for at least the first six months.
	Safe drinking water	Sanitize water before drinking.
	Diarrhea among infants and toddlers	Accept oral rehydration therapy.
	Infectious diseases	Wash hands.
	Alcoholism and drug abuse	Seek treatment.
	Senior falls	Have a fall risk assessment.
	Sanitation	Secure and place functioning latrines.
	Essential medicines	Form partnerships to secure funding or subsidize costs.
Mental health	Reduce stigma in communities.	
Education	School preparedness	Make sure preschoolers are read to 20 minutes a day.
	Literacy	Eliminate gender inequalities.
	Finishing high school	Find a volunteer tutor for at-risk youth.
Family planning	Teen pregnancy	Postpone having sex.
	Inability to support large families	Empower women to make fertility choices.
Food supply	Agricultural productivity	Add soil nutrients.
Employment	Unemployment	Apply for microfinancing loans.
	Lack of job skills	Attend jobs skills training.

(continued)

TABLE 3.1 Continued

Poverty-Related Issues That Social Marketing Might Help		One Behavior That Might Be Chosen for a Social Marketing Effort
Financial management	Bankruptcy	Live within your means.
Natural disasters	Hurricanes	Follow evacuation requests.
Shelter	Homelessness	Access available services.
	Shelter	Help build a roof to keep out the rain.
Safety	Smoke	Install a chimney to remove smoke from a cookstove.
	Domestic violence	Call the domestic violence help line.
	Crime	Form neighborhood watch groups.

How Does Social Marketing Differ from Commercial Marketing, Nonprofit Marketing, and Marketing in the Public Sector?

There are several important differences between social and commercial marketing:

- In the case of commercial marketing, the marketing process aims to sell a tangible product or service. In the case of social marketing, the marketing process is used to sell a *desired behavior*.
- Not surprisingly, in the commercial sector, the primary aim is *financial gain*. In social marketing, the primary aim is *individual* or *societal gain*. Commercial marketers choose target audiences that will provide the greatest volume of profitable sales. In social marketing, segments are selected based on a different set of criteria, such as what will produce the greatest amount of behavior change. In both cases, however, marketers seek to gain the greatest returns for their investment of resources.
- Competitors are very different. The commercial marketer sees competitors as other *organizations offering similar goods and*

services, or ones that satisfy similar needs. Social marketers see the *competition as the current or preferred behavior of the target audience* and the perceived benefits and costs of that behavior. This includes any organizations that sell or promote competing behaviors (such as the tobacco industry).

Social marketing is more difficult than commercial marketing. Consider the financial resources that the competition has available to make smoking look cool, to promote alcoholic beverages, to glamorize sexual promiscuity. And consider the challenges faced when trying to influence people to give up an addictive behavior (stop smoking), resist peer pressure (be sexually protected), go out of their way (avoid drinking contaminated water), hear bad news (get an HIV test), risk relationships (avoid taking hard drugs), or remember something (take pills three times a day).

Despite these differences, we also see many similarities between the social and commercial sector marketing models—ones that are key to any marketer’s success:

- *A customer orientation is critical.* The marketer knows that the offer (product, price, place) needs to appeal to the target audience, solving a problem they have or satisfying a want or need.
- *Exchange theory is fundamental.* The target audience must perceive benefits that equal or exceed the perceived costs.⁴ As Bill Smith at AED often exhorts, we should think of the social marketing paradigm as “Let’s make a deal!”⁵
- *Marketing research is used throughout the process.* Only by researching and understanding the specific needs, desires, beliefs, and attitudes of target adopters can the marketer build effective strategies.
- *Audiences are segmented.* Strategies must be tailored to the unique wants, needs, resources, and current behavior of differing market segments.
- *All Four Ps are considered.* A winning strategy requires an integrated approach, one utilizing all the tools in the toolbox, not just relying on advertising and other persuasive communications.

- *Results are measured and used for improvement.* Feedback is valued and seen as “free advice” on how to do better next time.

Social marketing efforts are most often initiated and sponsored by those working in government agencies or nonprofit organizations. However, in the nonprofit sector, marketing is more often used to support utilization of the organization’s services (such as tuberculosis testing), purchases of ancillary products and services (such as at museum stores), volunteer recruitment, advocacy efforts, and fundraising. In the government sector, marketing activities are also used to support utilization of government agency products and services (such as the post office and community clinics) and to engender citizen support and compliance. Thus, social marketing efforts are only one of many marketing activities conducted by those involved in nonprofit or public-sector marketing.

What Are the Main Principles of Social Marketing?

Focus on Behaviors

Similar to commercial-sector marketers, who sell goods and services, social marketers sell behaviors. Change agents typically want to influence target audiences to do one of four things:

- *Accept* a new behavior (such as putting a mosquito net over your bed)
- *Reject* a potentially undesirable behavior (such as starting smoking)
- *Modify* a current behavior (for example, for those with multiple sex partners, use a condom every time)
- *Abandon* an old, undesirable behavior (such as excessive alcohol use)

This may be the encouragement of a one-time behavior (such as getting tested for tuberculosis) or the establishment of a habit and the prompting of a repeated behavior (such as washing hands).

Although benchmarks may also be established for increasing knowledge and skills through education, and efforts may need to be made to alter existing beliefs, attitudes, or feelings, the bottom line for the social marketer is whether the target audience “buys” the behavior. For example, a specific behavior that substance abuse coalitions want to influence is for women to avoid alcohol during pregnancy. They recognize the need to inform women that alcohol may cause birth defects and convince them that this could happen to their baby. In the end, however, their measure of success will be whether the expectant mother abstains from drinking alcohol.

Recognize that Behavior Change Typically Is Voluntary

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of social marketing is that it relies heavily on voluntary compliance rather than legal, economic, or coercive forms of influence. And in many cases, the social marketers cannot promise a direct benefit or immediate payback in return for adopting the proposed behavior change. Remember the example of getting everyone in a village to voluntarily show up for a vaccination? Some believe that heavy reliance on individual voluntary behavior change is outdated and stress relying on other means, such as law or coercion. Those not showing up may have to pay a tax or lose schooling for their children or pay some other penalty. Social marketers prefer to encourage voluntary behavior change but may also advocate with other institutions (such as schools and laws) to use their influence as well when increased participation is seen as critical for a community.

Use Traditional Marketing Principles and Techniques

The most fundamental principle underlying marketing is to apply a *customer orientation overview* to understand market segments and each segment's potential needs, wants, beliefs, problems, concerns, and related behaviors. Marketers then select *target markets* they can best affect and satisfy. They establish clear *objectives and goals*. The product is *positioned* to appeal to the desires of the target market, and the game requires that marketers do this more effectively than the competition. They then use four major tools in the marketers' toolbox, the Four Ps, to influence target markets: product, price, place, and promotion, also called the *marketing mix*. Once a plan is implemented, *results are monitored and evaluated*, and strategies are altered as needed.

Select and Influence a Target Market

Marketers know that the marketplace is a collage of diverse populations, each having a distinct set of wants and needs. They know that what appeals to one individual may not appeal to another. Therefore, they divide the market into similar groups (market segments), measure the relative potential of each segment to meet organizational and marketing objectives, and then choose one or more segments (target markets) on which to concentrate their efforts and resources. For each target, a distinct mix of the Four Ps is developed, one designed to uniquely appeal to the targeted segment.

Considering again a more expanded view of social marketing, Robert Donovan and Nadine Henley, among others, advocate for also targeting individuals in communities who have the power to make institutional policy and legislative changes in social structures (such as school superintendents). These are upstream markets where efforts will move from (just) influencing an individual with a problem or potentially problematic behavior to influencing those who can facilitate individual behavior change.⁶ The techniques remain the same.

Recognize that the Beneficiary Is the Individual, Group, or Society as a Whole—Not the Sponsoring Organization

Unlike commercial sector marketing, in which a major intended beneficiary are the company investors, the primary beneficiary of the social marketing program is the individual, a group, or society as a whole. The question many raise is, who determines whether the social change created by the campaign is beneficial? Although most causes supported by social marketing efforts tend to draw high consensus that the cause is good, this model can also be used by opponents who have the opposite view of what is good. Abortion is an example of an issue where both sides argue that they are on the “good” side and both use social marketing techniques to influence public behavior. Who, then, gets to define “good”? Donovan and Henley propose the UN Universal Declaration of Human Right (www.unhchr.ch) as a baseline with respect to the common good. Alan Andreasen suggests that the client or sponsor of the campaign gets to make that call. Craig Lefebvre says, “It is in the eye of the beholder.”⁷

How Did the Social Marketing Concept Evolve?

When we think of social marketing as “influencing public behavior,” it is clear that campaigning for voluntary behavior change is not a new phenomenon. Consider efforts to free slaves, abolish child labor, give women the right to vote, and recruit women into the workforce.

Launching the discipline formally more than 37 years ago, the term *social marketing* was introduced by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman in a pioneering article in the *Journal of Marketing*. It described “the use of marketing principles and techniques to advance a social cause, idea, or behavior.”⁸ In the intervening decades, growing interest in and use of social marketing concepts, tools, and practices

have spread from public health and safety to use by environmental and community advocates, as is evident from the partial list of seminal events, texts, and journal articles in the following sidebar.

Social Marketing: Seminal Events and Publications

1970s:

- 1971: A pioneering article, “Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change,” in the *Journal of Marketing* by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman coins the term “social marketing.”
- More distinguished researchers and practitioners join the voice for the potential of social marketing, including Alan Andreasen (Georgetown University), James Mintz (Federal Department of Health, Canada) Bill Novelli (cofounder of Porter Novelli Associates), and William Smith (Academy for Educational Development).

1980s:

- World Bank, World Health Organization, and Centers for Disease Control start to use the term and promote interest in social marketing.
- 1981: An article in the *Journal of Marketing* by Paul Bloom and William Novelli reviews the first 10 years of social marketing. It highlights the lack of rigor in the application of marketing principles and techniques in critical areas of the field, including research, segmentation, and distribution channels.
- 1988: An article in the *Health Education Quarterly*, “Social Marketing and Public Health Intervention,” by R. Craig Lefebvre and June Flora, gives social marketing widespread exposure in the field of public health.
- 1989: The book *Social Marketing: Strategies for Changing Public Behavior*, by Philip Kotler and Eduardo Roberto, lays out the application of marketing principles and techniques for influencing social change management. (Nancy Lee joins the authors, and two subsequent editions are published in 2002 and 2008.)

1990s:

- Academic programs are established, including the Center for Social Marketing at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow and the Department of Community and Family Health at the University of South Florida.
- 1992: An article in the *American Psychologist* by J. Prochaska, C. DiClemente, and J. C. Norcross presents an organizing framework for achieving behavior change. It's considered by many as the most useful model developed to date.
- 1994: The publication *Social Marketing Quarterly* by Best Start, Inc. and The Department of Public Health, University of South Florida, is launched.
- 1995: The book *Marketing Social Change: Changing Behavior to Promote Health, Social Development, and the Environment*, by Alan Andreasen, makes a significant contribution to both the theory and practice of social marketing.
- 1999: The Social Marketing Institute is formed in Washington, D.C., with Alan Andreasen from Georgetown University as interim executive director.
- 1999: The book *Fostering Sustainable Behavior*, by Doug McKenzie-Mohr and William Smith, introduces community-based social marketing.

2000s:

- 2003: The book *Social Marketing: Principles and Practice* by Rob Donovan and Nadine Hadley was published in Australia.
- 2005: The National Social Marketing Centre is formed in London, England, headed by Jeff French and Clive Blair-Stevens.
- 2005: The 10th annual conference for Innovations in Social Marketing is held.
- 2006: The book *Social Marketing in the 21st Century*, by Alan Andreasen, describes an expanded role for social marketing.
- 2008: The 19th annual Social Marketing in Public Health conference is held.
- 2008: The first World Social Marketing Conference takes place in Brighton, England.

Source: *Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviors for Good* (Sage, 2008)

Bill Smith at AED pointed out that large-scale social marketing programs began in the 1970s:

“The first large-scale social marketing programs were international—the early diarrheal disease work in El Salvador by Manoff, AED’s work in Honduras, The Gambia, and then Egypt. Very soon after these efforts came the social marketing of contraceptives by PSI, the Futures Group, AED and others. Tens of millions of dollars have been invested in designing, conducting, and evaluating these social marketing efforts... From the very beginning they were product oriented and not message oriented. That is, the solution to a problem was found in social marketing of new products and services. Give-a-ways were never part of these early social marketing efforts. Products—condoms and contraceptives, ORS packets, etc, were physical products—with real costs, distribution channels, and promotion efforts. Price was discovered early on to ADD VALUE to products and some of the most interesting pricing studies among the poor have been done by these programs going back 30 years. But they are all but unknown by most ‘public health’ social marketers in the US.”⁹

Who Does Social Marketing?

In most cases, social marketing principles and techniques are used by those on the front lines who are responsible for improving public health, preventing injuries, protecting the environment, and engendering community involvement. Rarely do they have a social marketing title. More often, they are program managers or are working in community relations or communication positions. Efforts usually involve multiple change agents who, as Robert Hornik points out, may or may not be acting in a consciously coordinated way.¹⁰ Many international organizations are involved in social marketing activities, such as groups like the World Bank and units of the United Nations such as UNESCO and the World Health Organization. Most often

organizations sponsoring these efforts in a country such as the United States are *public sector agencies*, national ones such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Departments of Health, Departments of Social and Human Services, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Departments of Wildlife and Fisheries, and local jurisdictions including public utilities, fire departments, schools, parks, and community health clinics.

Nonprofit organizations and foundations also get involved, more often supporting behaviors aligned with their agency's mission. Here are some examples:

- World Vision trains birth attendants in Ghana.
- The Academy for Educational Development (AED) partnered with the private sector to increase the use of insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria.
- Population Services International (PSI) promotes multivitamins with iron and folic acid to women of reproductive age in developing countries.
- The Kaiser Family Foundation's Know HIV/AIDS campaign promotes testing.

What Are Other Ways to Impact Social Issues?

Social marketing clearly is not the only approach to impacting a social issue such as poverty, and social marketers are not the only ones who can influence the situation. Other forces and organizations, ones some people describe as upstream factors, can influence individual behaviors downstream—and even make personal change unnecessary. Included are technological innovations, scientific discoveries, improved infrastructures, new school policies and curricula, public education, and the media:

- *Technology.* In western Kenya, a fourth of the farmers in the Sauri district use a new technique to improve crops that involves planting nitrogen-fixing trees alongside maize and other food crops, providing a natural substitute for chemical fertilizers.¹¹
- *Science.* Medical discoveries may eventually provide inoculations for certain cancers, such as one recently released for young girls to help prevent cervical cancer. And in 2006, researchers at the Mayo Clinic announced they felt they were close to discovering a shot that could help smokers quit (or even ensure that they do).¹²
- *Improved infrastructures and built environments.* Clean water in South Africa became more accessible in some communities when an entrepreneurial company came up with a device to replace hand pumps. The Play Pump™ water system is a type of merry-go-round that pumps groundwater from boreholes into a storage tank. With the children spinning the merry-go-round about 16 times a minute, it can produce about 1,400 liters of water per hour, easily enough to meet the estimated 6 liters per person per day needed.
- *Schools.* School district policies and offerings can contribute significantly in all social arenas: health (offering healthier options in school cafeterias and regularly scheduled physical activity classes), safety (requiring students to wear ID badges), environmental protection (providing recycling containers in each classroom), and community involvement (offering school gymnasiums for blood donation drives).
- *Education.* The line between social marketing and education is a clear one. Education serves as a useful tool for the social marketer, but one that does not work alone. Most often education is used to communicate information and/or build skills, but it does not give the same attention and rigor to creating and sustaining behavior change. It primarily applies only one of the four marketing tools—promotion. Many in the field agree that when the information is motivating and “new” (such as the finding that secondhand tobacco smoke increases the risk of sudden infant death syndrome), it can quickly move a market from inaction—even resistance—to action. Unfortunately, this is not typical. Consider the fact that warnings about tobacco

use have been posted on cigarette packs for decades, yet the World Health Organization estimates that 29% of youth/adults (ages 15 and over) worldwide still smoke.¹³

- *Media.* News and entertainment media have a powerful influence on individual behaviors because they shape values, are relied on for current events and trends, and create social norms. Many argue, for example, that the casual and sensational attitude of movies and television toward sex has had a major contribution to the problems we see among young people today.¹⁴ On the flip side, the media was a powerful factor influencing people to donate time and resources to victims of Hurricane Katrina.

What Is the Social Marketer's Role in Influencing Upstream Factors?

Many believe that to date we have been placing too much of the burden for improving the status of social issues on individual behavior change and that social marketers should direct some of their efforts to influence upstream factors. We agree.

Alan Andreasen in his book *Social Marketing in the 21st Century* describes this expanded role for social marketing well:

“Social marketing is about making the world a better place for everyone—not just for investors or foundation executives. And, as we argue throughout this book, the same basic principles that can induce a 12-year-old in Bangkok or Leningrad to get a Big Mac and a caregiver in Indonesia to start using oral dehydration solutions for diarrhea can also be used to influence politicians, media figures, community activists, law officers and judges, foundation officials, and other individuals whose actions are needed to bring about widespread, long-lasting positive social change.”¹⁵

Consider the issue of the spread of HIV/AIDS. Downstream, social marketers focus on decreasing risky behaviors (such as unprotected sex) and increasing timely testing (such as during pregnancy).

If they moved their attention upstream, they would notice groups and organizations and corporations and community leaders and policy makers who could make this change a little easier or a little more likely, ones who could be a target market for a social marketing effort. Social marketers could advocate with others to influence pharmaceutical companies to make testing for HIV/AIDS quicker and more accessible. They could work with physician groups to create protocols to ask patients whether they have had unprotected sex, and, if so, encourage them to get an HIV/AIDS test. They would advocate with offices of public instruction to include curricula on HIV/AIDS in middle schools. They would support needle exchange programs. They would provide the media with trends and personal stories, maybe even pitch a story to producers of soap operas or situation comedies popular with the target audience. They might look for a corporate partner that would be interested in setting up testing at its retail location. They could organize meetings with community leaders such as ministers and directors of nonprofit organizations, even provide grants for them to allocate staff resources to community interventions. If they could, they would visit hair salons and barbershops, encouraging owners and staff to spread the word to their clients. They would testify before a senate committee to advocate for increased funding for research, condom availability, or free testing facilities.

The marketing process and principles are the same as ones used for influencing individuals, utilizing a customer orientation, marketing research, clear objectives and goals, positioning, a marketing mix, monitoring, and evaluation. Only the target market has changed.¹⁶

Summary

Social marketing is a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value to influence

target-audience behaviors that benefit society (public health, safety, the environment, and communities) as well as the target audience.¹⁷

Poverty-related issues that can benefit from social marketing applications include those that impact health, safety, education, family planning, food supply, employment, personal financial management, natural disasters, shelter, and gender inequality—all factors that when improved increase resilience to economic hardship and decrease vulnerability to poverty.

There are a few important differences between social marketing and commercial sector marketing. Social marketers are focused on selling a behavior, whereas commercial marketers are more focused on selling goods and services. Commercial sector marketers position their products against those of other companies, whereas the social marketer competes with the audience's current behavior and associated benefits. The primary benefit of a "sale" in social marketing is the welfare of an individual, group, or society, whereas in commercial marketing it is shareholder wealth.

There are many important similarities between the social and commercial marketing models:

- A customer orientation is critical.
- Exchange theory is fundamental.
- Marketing research is used throughout the process.
- Audiences are segmented.
- All the Four Ps are considered.
- Results are measured and used for improvement.

Principles for success are as follows:

- Focus on behaviors.
- Know that the behavior change typically is voluntary.
- Use traditional marketing principles and techniques.
- Select and influence a target market.
- Recognize that the beneficiary is the individual, group, or society as a whole.

Those engaged in social marketing activities include professionals in public sector agencies, nonprofit organizations, corporate marketing and community relations and advertising, public relations, and market research firms. A social marketing title is rare and is most likely to fall within the responsibility of a program manager, community relations, or communications professional.

Other approaches to changing behavior and impacting social issues include technological innovations, scientific discoveries, economic pressures, laws, improved infrastructures, changes in corporate business practices, new school policies and curricula, public education, and the media. Many agree that these factors and audiences are well within the purview, even responsibility, of social marketers to influence.

Endnotes

- ¹ Melinda Gates, keynote speaker, Seattle Biomedical Research Institute, April 30, 2008. Quote appeared on mailer promoting the event.
- ² Much of the text from the remainder of this chapter was adapted from Philip Kotler and Nancy R. Lee, *Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviors for Good*, 3rd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).
- ³ Kotler and Lee, op. cit., p. 7.
- ⁴ R. P. Bagozzi, "Marketing as Exchange: A Theory of Transactions in the Marketplace," *American Behavioral Science*, March–April 1978, pp. 535–556.
- ⁵ William Smith, "Social Marketing and Its Potential Contribution to a Modern Synthesis of Social Change," *Social Marketing Quarterly*, Volume VIII/Number 2, Summer 2002, p. 46.
- ⁶ Rob Donovan and Nadine Henley, 2003. *Social Marketing: Principles and Practices I* (Melbourne, Australia: IP Communications)
- ⁷ Social Marketing Listserve, 2006.
- ⁸ "Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change" (1971) in the *Journal of Marketing* by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman coined the term "social marketing."
- ⁹ Email communication from Bill Smith, November 2007.
- ¹⁰ Robert Hornik, "Some Complementary Ideas About Social Change," *Social Marketing Quarterly*, Volume VIII/Number 2, Summer 2002, p. 11.

- ¹¹ Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), p. 229.
- ¹² http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_wires/2006Jul27/0,4675,TobaccoVaccine,00.html.
- ¹³ Statistics are for the year 2000 from the World Health Organization, Tobacco Free Initiative.
- ¹⁴ Alan Andreasen and Philip Kotler, *Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations*, 6th edition (Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 490.
- ¹⁵ Alan Andreasen, *Social Marketing in the 21st Century* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), p. 11.
- ¹⁶ Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee, *Marketing in the Public Sector: A Roadmap for Improved Performance* (Prentice Hall, 2006).
- ¹⁷ Philip Kotler and Nancy R. Lee, *Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviors for Good*, 3rd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).