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COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH KEY PUBLICS

“My experience, and the experience of the extraordinary team who led the Organ Donation Breakthrough Collaborative over the course of a two year period in 2003 through 2005, shows that it is possible to make a big difference on a major national challenge. We did it together. We did it with using communication principles that work. We did it with a modest federal investment of approximately \$2 to \$4 million annually. We did it fast.

Gandhi said that the key to change is ‘to be the change you want to see in the world.’ That pretty much sums up what we all did together.”

Dennis Wagner
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By now you know that marketing is more than communications and that communications is only one of the tools that marketers have in their toolbox to inform, influence, and serve citizens. This does not minimize, however, the crucial and unique role this tool performs. Think of it as your hammer, intended to hit the nail on the head and secure your desired positioning and brand identity.

You probably have fewer challenges regarding the relevance of marketing communications in the public sector than you had with the first 3Ps. It is more accurate perhaps to say you have more questions, ones addressed in this chapter.

- How do people come up with these clever slogans like “Drive Hammered, Get Nailed” for a drunk driving prevention campaign?
- When should our agency’s logo be big and prominent, and when should it just be in the fine print?
- Why do some mascots like Smokey Bear work and others are just silly?
- Our agency heads keep suggesting we need PSAs. I heard somewhere they stand for “people sound asleep.” Is that true? If so, what other options do we have?
- And what do I say when the old familiar “We need a brochure” comes up, when I know people aren’t reading the ones we’ve already got?

In this opening story, you will read how effective communications have been and continue to be critical to an agency’s ambitious goal ... and to saving lives.

Opening Story: Increasing Organ Donation

Challenges

Organ donation and transplantation saves lives—lots of them. Recipients often go from being literally on the brink of death to

participating fully in life—even to running marathons. In 2004, nearly 27,000 of these life-saving and life-enhancing transplants were performed.

However, the need is much greater. As of November of 2005, more than 90,000 people in the U.S. were waiting for an organ that could save their life. 17 people would die each day waiting.

It doesn't have to be this way. If every eligible deceased organ donor and their families consented to donation, there would be enough organs to stop the daily deaths and to shrink the waiting list.

Under Tommy Thompson's leadership as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, an ambitious numerical goal was set in April, 2003: to save or enhance thousands of lives a year by spreading known best practices to the nation's largest hospitals to achieve organ donation rates of 75 percent or higher, with a national average of about 49 percent.

The challenge was a communications one: how to team with and persuade hospital and organ procurement organization (OPO) caregivers from several hundred organizations to rapidly learn and adapt the effective practices of those that already had high rates.

Strategies

The key strategy used was the methodology of a Collaborative. Put simply, a Collaborative is an intensive full-court press to facilitate breakthrough transformations in the performance of organizations, based on what already works. It employs an "All Teach, All Learn" approach to systematically expose the practices of high performers in clear, vivid, and compelling ways that make it easier for others to adapt and replicate these practices in their own organizations.

The Health and Human Services (HHS) Collaborative teamed with the Lewin Group, a premier national health care consulting firm, to conduct extensive reviews of large donor hospitals and their designated organ procurement organizations to codify the practices being used to generate high organ donation rates. These practices became the "Change Package" or menu of ideas for testing and adaptation that was provided to those committing to the 75 percent Aim.

Target Audiences

Because the Aim was to increase organ donation rates at the nation's largest hospitals (where most donors originate), target audiences were bedside nurses, intensivists, emergency room physicians, neurologists, hospital CEOs, nurse managers, trauma surgeons, chaplains, donation coordinators, social workers, and other key practitioners in these big hospitals and their procurement organizations who would be involved in organ donation cases. Strategies were tailored to these audiences.

Ultimately, 226 of the nation's largest hospitals and 50 of the 58 organ procurement organizations formally committed to the 75 percent Aim and fielded teams in the Collaborative.

Messages

Messages that drove the Collaborative emphasized change, action, results, and commitment. For example:

- “Every system is perfectly designed to get exactly the results that it gets. If you don't like the results you're getting, change your system.” Don Berwick, MD
- “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world—indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead, Anthropologist
- “You move closer to what you focus on. If you focus on problems, you get closer to them. Instead, choose to focus on your Aims and you will get closer to them.” Doug Krug, Enlightened Leadership

Some of the key messages emphasizing the need for rapid change came from organ donation recipients, donor families, and in one particularly vivid case, from the parents of a young girl who died while waiting for a lung transplant. This story, now captured on videotape and used widely throughout the entire donation and transplantation community, provides the fuel that hospital and OPO teams need to keep up an aggressive pace of learning, change, and improvement.

Messengers

The organ donation Collaborative emphasized a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up messenger strategy.

It was evident to the entire donation and transplantation community from the start that the highest levels of the government and the highest levels of the organ donation and transplantation leadership communities supported the Aim and Strategy of the Collaborative. These leaders joined with the HHS Secretary in committing to the Aim and guiding the overall effort.

Communication Channels

The most impressive channel used by the Collaborative was ongoing production of five- to seven-minute video clips that featured the people and practices of high-performing practitioners and Collaborative Teams in action.

These videos had multiple benefits, including vividly capturing the people and practices in action so that hospital and procurement teams knew *what* to adapt and replicate; rewarding and featuring those who generated results; interspersing the practices themselves with motivational and inspiring statements from national leaders, donor families, organ recipients, and those waiting; and providing every Collaborative Team member with readily transportable DVDs that could be used to educate and inspire other home-team members, ICU nurse colleagues, fellow emergency room physicians, and other donation coordinators.

Because of immediate success, demand for participation, and rapid growth in participation, HHS made a decision to begin satellite broadcasting the Learning Sessions. Other channels include the publications, events, annual meetings of Leadership Coordinating Council member organizations, a comprehensive Collaborative list-serv, a Collaborative Web site, and twice-monthly All-Collaborative conference calls where participation frequently numbers 300 or more people.

Rewards

In the first 21 months, nearly 3,000 additional life-saving and life-enhancing transplants already occurred as a result of increases driven by the Collaboratives.

Organ donations have increased by an unprecedented 10.8 percent in 2004 over 2003 and are estimated to exceed that growth in 2005.

Leaders believe that new initiatives, when coupled with the continuing growth and successes of these first Collaboratives, have the potential to *double the number of annual transplants over the course of the next several years.*¹

Promotion: The Fourth “P”

Marketing communications are used to inform, educate, and often persuade a target market about a desirable behavior. The word **Promotion** is used specifically to mean *persuasive communication* and is the fourth “P”, the tool you count on to ensure that target audiences know about you or your offer, believe they will experience the benefits you promise, and are inspired to act. These communications represent the voice of the brand and are designed and delivered to highlight your offer, determined by decisions you have already made regarding your product, price, and place. Your marketing objectives rely on this tool for support. Your target audiences are your source for inspiration and the ones whose opinion and response matter most.

Developing these communications is a process that begins with determining your key messages, including a desired style and tone. It moves from there to considering who will deliver these messages or at least who will be perceived as delivering them. And only after this do you select communication channels as the content and format of your messages can and should drive these choices.

A brief description of each component is noted here, with more detail and illustrative examples to follow in this chapter:

- *Messages* are what you want to communicate. They are inspired by considering what your target audience needs to know and believe to be likely to act.
- *Messengers* include any spokespersons, sponsors, partners, and actors used to deliver messages, and this includes who you want your target audience to think is the “seller” or “supplier” of the product and behind the communications.
- *Communication Channels* refers to where promotional messages that you have developed will appear. These are not to be confused

with distribution channels, described earlier as where and when the customer actually purchases the product, performs transactions, receives services, and/or participates in programs.

As noted, these communications decisions will be based on decisions already made regarding marketing objectives, target markets, desired brand identity, product, price, and place. They will impact decisions regarding evaluation, budget, and implementation plans. Chapter 13, “Developing a Compelling Marketing Plan,” will present an outline for a typical marketing plan, one that pulls all these components together using a sequential process.

Developing Messages

Three questions are suggested as a starting point for developing key messages for your marketing communication efforts. Noting (even in bullet format) your responses to what you want your target audience to know, believe, and do as a result of your communications will assist those who actually design your communications and help ensure that the final product communicates what you intend.

What Do You Want Your Target Audience to Know?

This aspect of message development focuses primarily on information: *specifics about your offer* (e.g., changes in garbage collection due to a holiday), *facts* you want citizens to be aware of (e.g., how the proposed changes in Medicare coverage will affect them), and any important *news* they may have missed (e.g., a need to evacuate due to an impending hurricane).

Knowing about HIV/AIDS challenged many governments in the 1980s and continues to challenge most even twenty-five years later. In 2004, Tika Shrestha and his family were living in a remote village of Nepal with no access to mass media and only a few radios. Tika knew nothing about HIV/AIDS until a letter arrived from his brother in Kathmandu bearing a sticker with the message, “Protect yourself and others from HIV/AIDS.” Curious to find out more,

he approached a community health volunteer who explained HIV/AIDS. He reported that now that he is fully aware of how the disease is spread and how to protect himself, he seeks opportunities to share his knowledge with others. To reach the many Nepali who live beyond the reach of mass media, the Ministry of Communication's Department of Postal Services placed this sticker on the outside of every piece of domestic and international mail for six months, ensuring that the message would reach the most remote corners of this mountainous kingdom. It is estimated that 14 million people, more than half the country's population, saw the postage stickers.²

What Do You Want Your Target Audience to Believe?

This is a different question. It's not about facts and information you want your target audience to have. It's about what you want them to *believe* and how you want them to *feel* about your offer, which of course includes your organization or any person, program, or efforts that are the focus for your communications. A great resource for answering this question is your brand promise—the benefits you want your target audience to believe they will experience. You can also refer to your brand identity—the images, thoughts, and feelings you want to come to mind.

It must be challenging to alter the preconceived beliefs that many businesses have about OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration), the agency within the U.S. Department of Labor charged with reducing workplace injuries and illnesses, often through direct intervention. The very name for employers, especially new ones, most likely conjures up images similar to those of auditors, border patrols, customs inspectors, or even barroom bouncers. Communications on the OSHA Web site and sound bytes from agency directors make it clear, however, how they would like to be seen. Messages seem intended to reposition intervention as consultation, compliance as prevention, and enforcement as assistance. Benefits of utilizing the agency's services and complying with standards are emphasized, as reflected in a speech delivered in 2004 by the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health

in which he urged that “Focusing on human assets and strong safety and health management systems is a triple win. #1. Lives are saved. #2. Businesses save money and maximize returns on investments. #3. Safe workplaces are productive workplaces where workers with high morale and high motivation produce high quality products and services.”³

What Do You Want Your Target Audience to Do?

Frequently, especially in the world of marketing, persuasive communications must go beyond informing and altering perceptions—they must zoom in on influencing individuals or businesses to act, to actually do something. Examples in the public sector that you have most likely been exposed to are numerous: fill out a form properly to get a building permit, call 911 for emergencies only, comply with workplace safety standards, evacuate before an impending disaster, sign up to be an organ donor, plant a tree on Earth Day, stay in school, attend public safety trainings at a fire station, sign up for the Peace Corps, talk with your children about drugs, and visit our town. Notice the focus on specific acts and behaviors. Notice how critical these actions must be to an agency’s success, to supporting missions and goals for utilization of programs and services, participation rates, and compliance. Consider as well the potential benefits that motivating messages will have to citizens.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, for example, wants citizens to “Be Ready,” not afraid. Messages on printed materials, featured in public service announcements, and reinforced on the Web site focus on persuading households and businesses to do four things: #1. Get a kit of emergency supplies. #2. Make a plan for what you will do in an emergency. #3. Be informed about what might happen. #4. Get involved in preparing your community (see Figure 7.1). Detail is provided on exactly what should be included in kits, how to create a plan that includes deciding what friend or family members to call to keep in touch, and how to get training to help others in your community. This quote on the Web site sets the tone: “While there is no way to predict what will happen, or what your personal circumstances will be, there are simple things you can do now to prepare yourself and your loved ones.”⁴

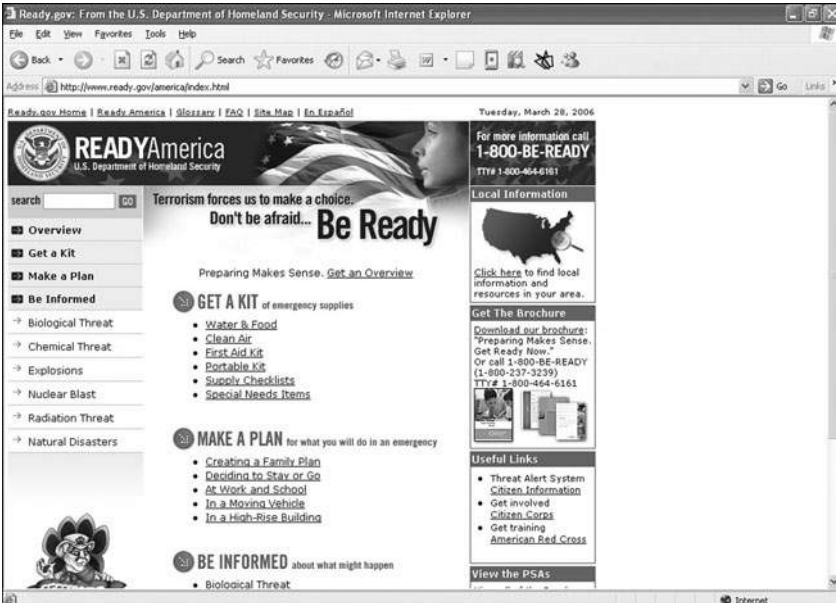


FIGURE 7.1 Web site for Ready.gov (<http://www.ready.gov/index.html>)

Keys to Effective Messages

Several tips are presented in this section on how to create effective messages. The foundation for your messages will be your answers to the questions just posed regarding “What do you want your target audience to know? To believe? To do?” In most cases, your most powerful options will “simply” emerge from this fertile ground. When creating specific slogans, headlines, and other key messages, your primary attention should be given to simplicity and to customer benefits. In addition, messages are more likely to be understood if they create vivid images, remembered if they are brief, and valuable if they support the style and tone of your brand personality.

Keep It Simple

Once more, Ries and Trout offer sound advice, this time focusing on the importance of brevity and clarity of messages. “In communication, more is less. Our extravagant use of communication to solve a host of business and social problems has so jammed our channels that only a tiny fraction of all messages actually gets through. And not necessarily

the most important ones either ... There's a traffic jam on the turn-pikes of the mind. Engines are overheating. Tempers are rising.”⁵

Evidently the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's simple message offering citizens an opportunity to sign up for the “Do Not Call” registry to cut down on unwanted telemarketing calls got through (see Figure 7.2). The list took effect on October 1, 2003, and by December of 2005, a poll conducted by New York-based Harris Interactive Inc. indicated that 76 percent of U.S. adults say they have signed up for the registry.⁶



FIGURE 7.2 Logo for the Federal Trade Commission's Do Not Call Registry

Focus on Citizen Benefits

In Chapter 3, “Developing and Enhancing Popular Programs and Services,” you read about the core product, one of the three levels of a product platform, the one described as the benefit consumers are seeking and expecting to receive when they purchase and consume your offer. Effective messages highlight these potential benefits. They signal your brand's promise. They frame your offer to highlight benefits (fitness) over features (exercise). Perhaps that was what officials in Canada had in mind when they created titles for their agencies such as Health Canada, Environment Canada, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, Social Development Canada, and Status of Women Canada.

To further demonstrate this effect, compare your response as a driver in a suburban neighborhood to two alternative signs featured in Figure 7.3. Which one would you be more likely to comply with? Why?

Use Words That Create Vivid Images

Most brand names, slogans, and other key messages will conjure up some sort of image in the recipient's mind. Your job as a communicator



FIGURE 7.3 Different approaches to communicating speed limits

is for those images to be strong, memorable, and intentional. The trick is to choose words that trigger images containing meanings you want to be associated with your communications. Typically, the more vivid the image, the better.

Consider the differences in images you have for each of these two slogans: “You Drink & Drive, You Lose” and “Drive Hammered, Get Nailed.” The first message, used by many states, most likely sends a “zero tolerance” message and seems targeted at social drinkers. If this is what was intended, it is probably on track. If, however, the target is a potential drunk driver, the second slogan seems more appropriate, creating a distinct and vivid image of a clear warning directed at hard-core offenders (see Figure 7.4).



FIGURE 7.4 Washington State's message for drunk drivers

Make It Easy to Remember

This seems like an obvious tip, but it is still worth a mention. You want to create slogans and key messages that people will remember when they don't have your forms, signs, brochures, posters, Web site, staff, or public service announcements with them at a point of decision making or action. This is especially important when there are desired actions with benefits and costs, both for your agency as well as the citizen.

You want citizens to remember emergency numbers such as "911" without having to find a phone book. You want drivers to remember to "Move right for sirens and lights" so that emergency vehicles can provide assistance as quickly as possible. You want taxpayers to remember to file their return by "April 15th." You want pedestrians approaching a railroad crossing to "Stop, look, and listen" and hikers to "Stay on the trail." You want travelers in security lines to "Take change and keys out of pockets" before reaching security scanners. You want pet owners to "Scoop the Poop." You want employees caught in a tall office building on fire to remember to take the stairs, form a single line, and "Put your hand on the shoulder of the person in front of you." And you want homeowners to "put yard waste out the first week of the month."

Ensure That Style and Tone Fit the Brand

An additional checkpoint for developing and selecting effective messages is that of your brand personality. By the time you get to this stage of creating messages and slogans, ideally the brand identity has been established and understood by those involved in their development. By using this identity as a resource, you make it more likely that your communications will be associated with your brand. You also make it more likely your messages will be remembered and that your desired brand image is reinforced.

Phrases describing your brand personality will help set the stage, a process that could be supported by the exercise suggested in an earlier chapter to fill in the blanks to the phrase, "I want my target audience to see my brand as _____." It would follow, then, that an agency or program that wanted to be perceived as *smart and resourceful* (a community library) would have communications that differed in style and tone from one that wanted to be seen as *warm and friendly*

(a community center), and that an agency wanting to be perceived as *strong and objective* (city police) would have different messages and slogans than one who wanted to be seen as *helpful and nurturing* (a community clinic). Similarly, an agency that wanted to be seen as *responsive and reliable* (an electric utility) would highlight different features and benefits than one that wanted to be seen as *educational and full of opportunities for adventure* (a national park.). Based on the tone and style of the sign in Figure 7.5, how do you think transit managers wanted to be seen by travelers on their subway?



FIGURE 7.5 Sign in a New York subway station

Choosing Messengers

In most cases, the messenger (or source of your message) will be your organization and will be identified for your audiences by your agency's name or logo appearing on signage, printed materials, and other special promotions. However, you still face additional decisions and options regarding your messenger. Will you also include a spokesperson, and if so, who it will be? Should you consider a mascot? Will you feature additional partners in the communications, or do you want to be seen as the sole sponsor? Each decision is important to your communications'

effectiveness because some messengers can achieve higher attention, recall, and influence than others, and this impact will vary by audience segment.

Three factors have been identified as most important when considering your messenger: perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and likeability.⁷ This applies to your selection of a spokesperson, mascot, or partner as well as your decision to “go it alone.” *Expertise* refers to the specialized knowledge the target audience thinks that the communicator possesses. *Trustworthiness* is related to how objective and honest the source is perceived to be. Friends, for example, are trusted more than strangers or salespeople, and people who are not paid to endorse a product are viewed as more trustworthy than people who are paid. *Likeability* describes the messenger’s attractiveness, with qualities like candor, humor, and naturalness making a source more likeable. The most highly credible source, of course, would be one who scores high on all three dimensions, which are qualities you can consider as you explore the following messenger options.⁸

You Can Use a Spokesperson

A spokesperson could come from your agency (a state attorney general doing a radio spot warning parents of the consequences of serving alcohol to minors), from another governmental agency on your behalf (a New York police officer doing a PSA on emergency preparedness for Homeland Security), or from outside the agency (a group of children making a presentation at a community event requesting support for a new recycling center in their neighborhood).

In Japan, a nationwide campaign in 2005 to save energy by cutting down on air conditioning focused on asking workers to leave their ties and jackets home during the summer. Many people in the U.S. would have no problem with that, but in Japan, where conformity and tradition are prized, workers evidently were finding it tough to comply. Evidently to persuade them to release their inhibitions, a photo showed up in a newspaper advertisement featuring Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi wearing a half-sleeve shirt without a tie, urging his Cabinet to follow suit. The effort seems to be having some effect. At a major Tokyo department store, it was reported that men’s shirt sales were up 17 percent in May from a year earlier.⁹

You Can Be the Sole Sponsor

In this case, the most traditional of the options, the agency is the clear and sole source of the communications. Certainly when you look at the most common types of communications in the public sector (e.g., forms, brochures, applications, signs, Web sites), you'll only see one agency's name or logo. This seems appropriate in most cases, and it can be tested by referring to the three major factors presented earlier. Are you (the agency) perceived as an expert on this matter? Are you a trusted source of information? Do you have a favorable, likeable image relative to this particular communication, program, or effort?

There were mixed reactions in the news, for example, to an announcement in 2004 that the U.S. Pentagon had created its own 24-hour television channel, covering Defense Department briefings, interviews with top defense officials, and stories about the daily life and work of service members. An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* in April 2005 reflected these polar perspectives: "The anchors and reporters wear uniforms instead of neckties and suits, and the commercials promote the military, not laundry soap and cutlery sets. But otherwise, the Pentagon Channel, which is on the cusp of its first anniversary—looks and sounds a lot like CNN and C-SPAN. To the people who run the Department of Defense television network, that's exactly the point. To critics, that's exactly the problem."¹⁰

You Can Include Partners

For some issues, you may need support in order to achieve communication objectives—sometimes only the kind you can get from an outsider.

You may need a partner who is seen as more of an expert. Public health departments often quote the American Academy of Pediatrics as the source for childhood immunization schedules and the American Lung Association regarding the specific risk factors related to exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke.

You may want a partner to help decrease any suspicions your target audience has regarding your motives or true agenda. A local sport-fishing club might be a good partner for communications discussing

homeowners as a source of water pollutants in lakes and streams, dispelling citizen perspectives that corporations are the problem, not individual citizens, and that governmental agencies are just “picking on the little guys.”

You may benefit from a partner who adds likeability to your effort. Consider how the American Red Cross helps to round out the personality of a relief effort, seen by many as providing the heart as well as the hand.

You Can Create a Character or Mascot

Characters and mascots for delivering messages help create attention and recall, especially when children are one of your target audiences. They might also be a great choice for an agency or program needing a little help with the “likeability” factor.

Why has Smokey Bear been cherished and listened to for more than sixty years and McGruff the Crime Dog for more than twenty-five? Perhaps it has something to do with choosing great mascots in the first place, ones in these cases that appeal to our natural love of teddy bears and one of our best, most loyal friends. Consider as well the strategic connection that a bear has with the forest and a dog with guarding a home. Their success is also due, no doubt, to the fact that their sponsoring agencies have worked hard to keep them alive, not tiring of their costumes, names, or personalities, protecting their graphic standards, and making it easy for others to access costumes, logos, and materials for reproduction.

Selecting Communication Channels

After messages and messengers have been selected, you now face the daunting and often frustrating task of selecting communication channels—daunting because of the vast array of options and the varying advantages and disadvantages of each, and frustrating because you may not be able to afford or justify ones you would like to use. Major types of communication channels and specific media vehicles are summarized in Figure 7.6 and described briefly in the following section.

ADVERTISING

<p>Broadcast Television Radio Internet: Banner Ads</p> <p>Print Newspaper Magazine</p> <p>Ads on the Internet/Web sites Ads on backs of tickets and receipts Ads at theater using still shots and videos</p>	<p>Outdoor/Out of Home Billboards Busboards Bus shelter displays Subways Taxis Vinyl wrap cars and buses Sports events Kiosks Restroom stalls Airport billboards and signage</p>
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PUBLIC RELATIONS

<p>Stories on television and radio Articles in newspapers and magazines</p>	<p>OpEds Videos</p>
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SPECIAL EVENTS

<p>Community Meetings Demonstrations/Exhibits</p>	<p>Fairs Tours</p>
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DIRECT MARKETING

<p>Mail Internet/Email</p>	<p>Telemarketing Catalogs</p>
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PRINTED MATERIALS

<p>Forms Brochures Newsletters Flyers Calendars</p>	<p>Posters Envelope messages Booklets Static stickers Door hangers</p>
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SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

<p>Clothing: T-shirts Baseball hats Diapers Bibs</p> <p>Items More Temporary in Nature: Coffee sleeves Bar coasters and napkins Buttons Temporary tattoos Balloons Stickers Fortune cookies</p>	<p>Functional Items: Key chains Flashlights Refrigerator magnets Water bottles Litterbags Pens and Pencils Bookmarks Book covers Notepads Tote bags Mascots Cellphone cases</p>
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FIGURE 7.6 Typical Communication Channels and Vehicles [Adapted from: Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, *Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002)]

SIGNAGE & DISPLAYS	
Road signs Signs and posters on governmental property or property regulated by government	
PERSONAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	
Face-to-face meetings and presentations Workshops, seminars, training sessions	Word of mouth Word of Web
POPULAR MEDIA	
Public art Songs Script in movies, television, radio programs	Comic books and comic strips Playing cards and other games

FIGURE 7.6 (Continues) Typical Communication Channels and Vehicles
 [Adapted from: Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, *Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002)]

Where Will Messages Appear?

Advertising is formally defined as “any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor.”¹¹ In the public sector, it is also relevant to include unpaid forms of advertising in this category, most commonly known as public service announcements (PSAs), where the space or time for the placement of the advertisement is free. A notable advantage of PSAs of course is the cost; the disadvantage is that you have very little control over where the ad will appear in the newspaper or magazine or when it will play on broadcast media, a phenomenon mentioned earlier that has led some to refer to a PSA as “people sound asleep.”

Advertising can be used over the long term to build a desired image for an organization or in the shorter term to trigger a quick response. It is seen as the most pervasive of the communication tools, allowing the marketer to reach large audiences frequently (budget permitting, of course). Most advertising media vehicles provide opportunities for dramatization through sight, sound, and/or motion, as on television, radio, and the Web.

The Peace Corps introduced a new public service announcement campaign in 2003 and out-of-home PSA components eighteen months later. The campaign features a new tagline (“Life Is Calling. How Far Will You Go?”) and a new logo treatment in the form of a patch.

(See Figure 7.7.) PSAs are made available to interested media outlets; they can request varying sizes of print and out-of-home media, and they can choose the length in seconds for radio and television spots.

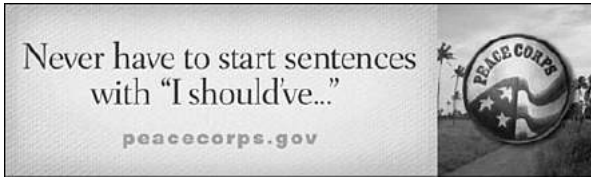


FIGURE 7.7 Peace Corps' out-of-home PSA advertising appearing on donated billboards and transit displays¹²

Public Relations is distinguishable by its outcome—free publicity. This communication channel is one of the more powerful and is often considered the most authentic and credible by receiving audiences. It provides, some believe, the ability to catch people off guard, especially those who prefer to avoid advertisements and salespersons. It has the same desirable potential for dramatization as advertising does. To get this publicity, a variety of tactics are used, including issuing and following up on news releases, press kits, and invitations to press conferences and notifying the media of opportunities for interviews and photos.

The Snohomish County Public Utility District, near Seattle, generated significant publicity in 2004—for example, when it released new financial documents and audiotapes showing that Enron had illegally obtained more than \$1 billion in profits from western state ratepayers. The utility used the evidence to bolster its case related to a disputed Enron energy contract, securing hundreds of news stories, including the lead story on the CBS Evening News, countless reports on network and cable news channels, and articles in the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. This publicity then prompted the Washington State governor, members of Congress, and attorneys general from several western states to pressure federal regulators to expedite their legal review of Enron. Ultimately, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission expanded its Enron review, which could save the Seattle-area utility more than \$100 million.¹³

Special Events include those that are parts of large public gatherings (a county fair) as well as ones organized and conducted by your agency (a tour of your facility). Activities range from those that include booths to equipment displays and showcases to community meetings to child-oriented contests and activities. There are several advantages to this channel. It can foster interaction with target audiences, allowing them to ask questions and express opinions you probably need to hear. It provides opportunities for hands-on experiences and engagement with your agency's staff, building stronger relationships.

The Chicago Police Department, for example, holds beat meetings. A beat team consists of police officers assigned to a fairly small area of the city, and every beat has a monthly public meeting, with officers from the beat and representatives from a special office such as the gang office or the youth office. As of 2004, there were an average of 250 meetings a month where police reported back to citizens on what they had done since the last meeting and new problems were discussed. Attendance from the public is seasonal, with a good meeting in the summer of about 33 citizens. On average, about 6,700 people a month come to these meetings, which importantly are best attended in high-crime areas. According to Wesley Skogan, a professor of political science at Northwestern University, these events have contributed in part to the fact that “public confidence in the police is up and crime is down. There’s been an enormous decline in the crime rate, and the bulk of that has been in poor African American neighborhoods.”¹⁴

Direct Marketing is a direct communication to specific individuals with intent to solicit some response or initiate some dialogue. Major vehicles include direct mail (a water bill insert promoting low-flow toilets), telemarketing (notifying residents of an electrical outage), catalogs (energy-saving fixtures and appliances), and Internet marketing (a listing of road repair projects and their expected completion dates). It offers the ability to customize messages and provide up-to-date information, and it is famous for its ability to elicit a response.

Consider the Web-based activities alone related to annual Earth Day celebrations. Ideas are provided for taking action in your home (how to use less water), in your classroom (games for teachers to offer their students), at work (ideas for green building), and in the community (how to find events in your state and options for volunteering). (See Figure 7.8.) You can even get the weather forecast for Earth Day

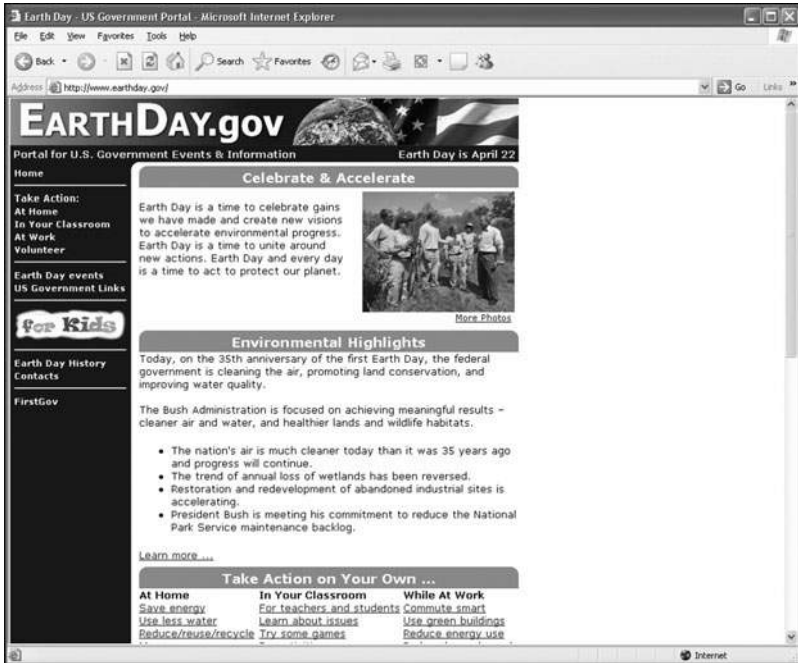


FIGURE 7.8 Earth Day events promoted on their Web site

in your community by entering your ZIP code. And partners in this effort such as Google get in the act as well, as they did in 2005 by dressing up their homepage with trees, squirrels, and birds!

Printed Materials are what most would agree is the public sector's most frequently used communication channel, so much so that when many think of marketing in the public sector, printed materials first come to mind. The array of options is familiar: forms, brochures, flyers, posters, newsletters, booklets, and calendars.

A survey of public agencies conducted by *Public Works Magazine* in April 2005, for example, found that among respondents using printed marketing materials, 73 percent distributed brochures, 60 percent issued newsletters, 48 percent developed handouts, 29 percent used door hangers, and 23 percent printed calendars. The City of Indianapolis reported use of a full spectrum of printed materials, including a brochure to promote their public works department, an electronic newsletter, water bill inserts promoting new initiatives, and topic-specific brochures covering issues related to flood control, winter weather, ozone awareness, downspout disconnection, and sump pumps.¹⁵

Although applications and forms are not technically promotional tools, you are encouraged to consider them as important communication vehicles, ones that can support a desired brand image or reinforce an undesirable one. An agency that wants to be seen as helpful and accessible will want forms that are clear and simple, and one that wants to encourage voluntary participation in an activity will want registration forms that take a minimal amount of time complete. Your brand identity statement will provide an excellent guide and point of reference. Your target audience will let you know how you're doing!

Special Promotional Items is a unique category and a catchall for a vast array of functional items like refrigerator magnets as well as nonfunctional ones like balloons. It is sometimes endearingly referred to in the marketing world as “trinkets and trash.” At the least, these items can help launch a campaign or program message. When designed to be more strategic, sustainable, and functional, they can also serve as prompts and reminders. They can even be used as a form of recognition.

The Tennessee Valley Authority offers businesses participating in their Green Power Switch[®] program a window sticker, which is considered a positive public relations tactic because it signals to customers that the business is opting to use renewable energy resources (see Figure 7.9). Businesses pay a little more for electricity generated from cleaner sources, but they consider it a strategy to help improve the environment, distinguish themselves from competitors, and appeal to customers with an environmental ethic.¹⁶



FIGURE 7.9 Window sticker given to businesses using renewable energy resources

Signage opportunities in the public sector are envied by many in the commercial sector because the public sector has many highly visible ways to communicate with citizens: signage on roadways and at airports, post offices, schools, libraries, parks, community centers, and more. Opportunities such as these to reach large groups of citizens on a frequent and sustained basis at low costs are hard to come by in the private sector.

Although this example, described on Wikipedia, is among the oldest in this book, it is a great example of the power of an effective sign. On Sunday, September 3, 1967 at 5 a.m. in Sweden, traffic switched from the left-hand side of the road to the right. It was called Dagen H (H day), with the H standing for Hogertrafik, the Swedish word for “right-hand traffic.” Arguments for the change seemed clear. All of Sweden’s immediate neighbors drove on the right, including Norway. Most Swedes drove left-hand drive vehicles, which led to many head-on collisions when passing on two-lane highways, which are common in Sweden because of its low population density and traffic levels. Nonetheless, the change was unpopular with citizens. Signage needed to play a strong role in notification that the program was a go, as well as to provide clear prompts and reminders of the change (see Figure 7.10). Evidently, it did. “On the Monday following Dagen H, there were 125 reported traffic accidents, compared with a range of 130 to 198 for previous Mondays.” And no fatal traffic accidents were attributed to the switch.¹⁷



FIGURE 7.10 Sign used to inform and remind drivers in Sweden to switch to driving on the right side of the road

Personal Communication Channels are those involving two or more persons communicating directly face-to-face, person-to-audience, over the telephone, or through email. This channel of personal influence carries great weight, with the word of mouth subchannel being especially powerful. A study by Burson-Marsteller and Roper Starch Worldwide found that one influential person's word of mouth tends to affect the buying attitudes of two other people on average. That circle of influence, however, jumps to eight when online. Thus "word of Web" has joined "word of mouth" as an important buying influence.¹⁸ Marketers also continue to be interested in a relatively new distinction, one they call "buzz marketing." This strategy starts with a satisfied customer and bases itself on the impact this person could have on other potential customers. Providing an unusually positive customer experience causes customers to then act as "buzz marketing agents, literally working for brands free of charge."¹⁹

Speaking of reaching people, consider this example of personal persuasive communications. As Hurricane Katrina moved up the East Coast from the Gulf of Mexico in September 2005, officials in Virginia decided to try a different pitch to persuade citizens to evacuate. Rescue workers decided to go door to door as they did in New Orleans but planned in addition that if people resisted the plea to leave, the rescue workers would give them Magic Markers and ask them to write their Social Security numbers on their body parts so they could be identified later. "It's cold, but it's effective," one official told news reporters.²⁰ Some believe this simple strategy could have persuaded hundreds of people to save their own lives in New Orleans.

Popular Media is one of the least utilized yet most powerful channels. It is well understood that movies, television, radio, music, and even comic strips have a great deal of influence on citizens and are indeed instruments of social change, both positive and negative. Many agree, for example, that the casual and sensational attitude of these media toward sex and drug use in the past has made a major contribution to the problems we have in both of these areas today, especially among youth.²¹

Andreasen and Kotler point to a more positive example: "In the first years of the twenty-first century, the NBC program *The West Wing* has done a great deal to educate the public about important public policy issues. Many social observers believe that this program

had done more to explain the issues of the day (the nature of terrorism, the use of sampling in the Census) than has any other public discussion or media coverage. (Observers have also noted that the program has also done a great deal to counteract the widespread notion that federal government leaders were immoral, self-serving egotists—an unanticipated public relations coup.)”²²

Corralling these ideas as instruments for positive change sometimes can be a simple matter of bringing an issue to the attention of the broadcast or movie industry through a letter, email, or personal visit. For many years, for example, no one in a movie or television episode (including police officers) ever put on a seat belt before driving off. When this fact was brought to their attention, many directors incorporated regular seat belt use as a matter of course.²³ You can also explore a strategy of inserting a branded product or service (e.g., Smokey Bear) in a natural way in some form of the media, a tactic known as product placement.

Keys to Success When Selecting Communication Channels

Clearly there are numerous potential options for where and when your messages will appear. To be successful, you will want to choose those that best support your communication objectives and goals, that are within your budget constraints (of course), and that are a good match for your target audience. As you make these choices, you should also be on the lookout for strong yet uncluttered channels and strive for an integrated approach.

Support Communications Objectives and Goals

As you will read in Chapter 13, a formal marketing plan will establish clear communication objectives in terms of what you intend to influence your target audience to know, believe, and/or do. It will also present a quantifiable goal, stating how many or what percentage of your target audience you want to persuade. These directives will then help guide your choice of media channels as well as their timing and frequency. For example, a state wanting citizens to know about new voting regulations requiring official identification at the polls may want 80 percent of adults eighteen and older in the state to know

about the new regulation (reach) and to be exposed to messages at least nine times during a six-week campaign (frequency). This ambitious reach and frequency goal would most likely lead planners to use broadcast media and a variety of television and radio stations.

Allocate Funds Based on Budget Realities

Stating perhaps the obvious, the more reach, frequency, and impact you seek, the higher your budget will need to be. Indeed, media strategies and associated budgets are based on desired and agreed-upon campaign goals (e.g., reach 80 percent of potential voters). In reality, plans are influenced most by budgets and available funding sources. Initial estimates of a draft media plan to achieve a goal may indicate that costs for the desired reach and frequency exceed actual and fixed budgets. In this all too familiar scenario, planners will need to prioritize and allocate funding to media types and vehicles judged to be most efficient and effective. In some cases, it may then be necessary and appropriate to revise campaign goals (e.g., reach 60 percent of potential voters) and/or create a phased approach to campaign implementation (e.g., achieve the 80 percent goal in major metropolitan areas only).²⁴

Match Media to Target Audience Behaviors and Characteristics

Perhaps the most important consideration when selecting communication channels will be the target market's *profile* (demographics, psychographics, geographics, and behaviors) and *media habits*. The goal is to choose general media types, specific vehicles, and the timing most likely to reach, appeal to, and influence target audiences. *Compatibility* of your messages with the medium will contribute to the ultimate impact you have. For example, a message regarding safe gun storage is more strategically aligned with a parenting magazine than one on gardening, even though both may have readerships with similar demographic profiles.²⁵

Look for Uncluttered Channels

As a consumer, you have no doubt experienced the clutter of traditional communication channels, most likely on television and radio, in

magazines and newspapers, on the Internet, and in your mailbox. You may be baffled by how any of this works, exclaiming, “I often remember a commercial but can’t for the life of me remember the product or sponsor.” It is worth your time to brainstorm with your colleagues, communication professionals, and even your customers to discover new, uncluttered venues. A decade or so ago, no one would have believed that we would be walking around flaunting brands on our t-shirts and hats, even our bodies (with temporary tattoos). And how clever someone was to consider inserting promotional messages in fortune cookies! What haven’t they thought of yet? What could you think of?

Strive for an Integrated Approach

Integrated marketing communications is an approach intended to help ensure that your messages are consistent, clear, and compelling. It requires you to carefully integrate and coordinate communications across all marketing communication channels (see Figure 7.11). It means that your key messages in your press release announcing a new initiative are the same as those in your direct mail campaign and that your brochure has the same “look and feel” as your Web site. It requires you to consider all brand contact points the customer may encounter because each will deliver a message, whether good, bad, or indifferent.²⁶

At the agency level, some organizations appoint a marketing communications director who has overall responsibility for the organization’s communications efforts. Outcomes are rewarding with more consistent communications and ultimate impact for the agency.

At the program level, although the scope is narrower, the task is the same: ensuring that each channel carries consistent messages about your offer, delivered in a tone and style that supports your desired brand image.

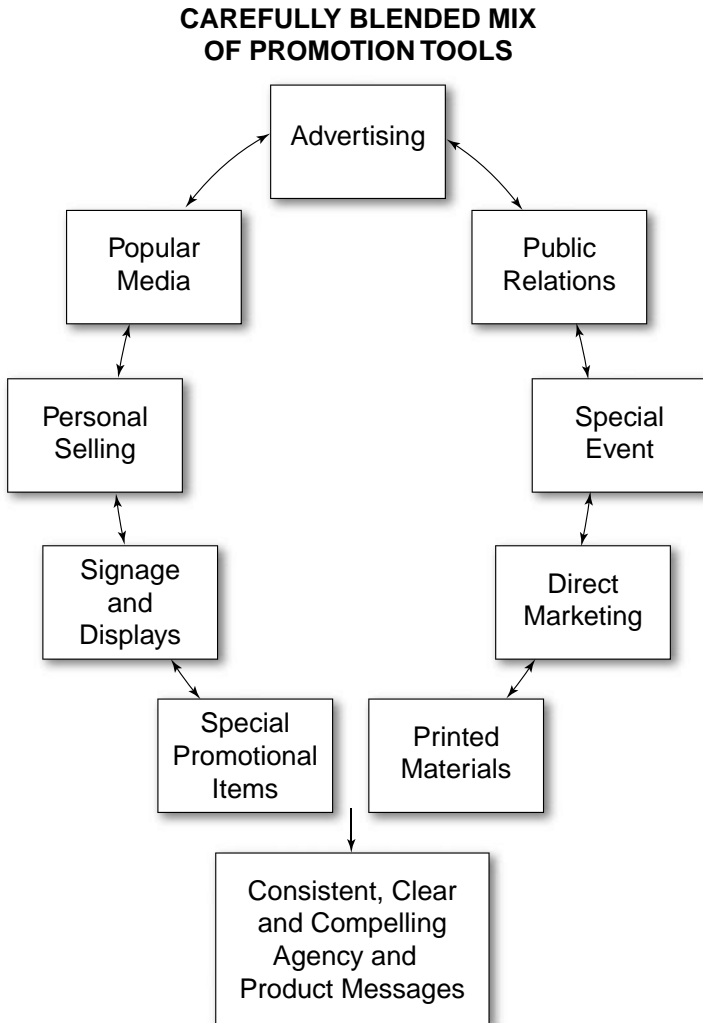


FIGURE 7.11 Integrated marketing communications

Summary

Promotion, the fourth “P” in the marketing toolbox, is persuasive communication, distinguished by its intent to ensure that target audiences know about your offer, believe they will experience the benefits you promise, and are inspired to act.

Based on decisions that you will have already made in your marketing planning process regarding your offer (product, price, and

place), communication strategies will be developed based on the unique profile and characteristics of your target audience and will be designed to support marketing objectives, goals, and a desired brand identity.

Three major components of communications were explored: messages, messengers, and communication channels.

Message development can start with articulating what you want your target audience to know, believe, and do as a result of your communications. Recommendations are to keep it simple, focus on customer benefits, use words that create vivid images, make it easy to remember, and ensure that style and tone fit the brand.

Messengers are those who actually deliver your messages or who you want target audiences to perceive as the one behind your communications. In some cases, your agency itself will be the sole sponsor. Other options on the table include using a spokesperson, including partners in a prominent way, or using a character or mascot as a core element of your campaign. It was recommended that these decisions be guided by three influential factors: perceived expertise, trust, and likeability of the potential messenger.

Communication channels, also referred to as media types, are where promotional messages will appear. Major media types for public sector agencies include advertising, public relations, special events, direct marketing, printed materials, special promotional items, signage and displays, personal selling, and popular media. Within each of these major channels, there are multiple options, which are referred to as media vehicles. Keys to communication success are to select media types and vehicles that will support communications objectives and goals, that are prioritized based on budget realities, and that match your target audience behaviors and characteristics. You were encouraged as well to look for new, uncluttered channels and to strive for an integrated communications strategy.

One final note. Restrain yourself and others from selecting media channels and vehicles before you have solidified your message strategy. Until you know what you need to communicate, you will not know your best media options. And to those people who keep saying, “We need a brochure,” tell them about the stamp that effectively spread the word about HIV/AIDS throughout Nepal.