

Social Marketing and Communication Strategy

1. Introduction

By social marketing we mean applying the principles of marketing, that is selling something, to the problem of creating change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. In this case it is change in relation to service coordination between people in general practice and others. A communication strategy is a plan for a systematic and carefully thought out communication campaign to persuade categories of people to change their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

2. Key ideas

Marketing as messages for change

With social marketing we are trying to influence groups, or populations, of people through the use of communication strategies. We are trying to influence knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes.

A communication strategy clearly describes:

- Who is to be communicated with (audiences)
- The objectives of the communication (the changes sought)
- Channels and vehicles of communication (how you will communicate)
- Messages (content)
- Evaluation of the communication strategy

3. Essential aspects of social marketing

A. *consumer orientation*

The emphasis is very much on needs and preferences of the 'target audience'. Programs are created for target audiences taking into account things like their values, common behaviours, circumstances of their work, beliefs and knowledge.

It is important to understand the point of view of the target audiences.

B. *emphasis on voluntary exchange between communicator and audience*

The communicator is asking the audience to change in some way – knowledge, skills, behaviour etc. The communicator to appeal to benefits of the change that the audience values. Change involves effort or 'cost'. 'Costs' may be monetary but equally, they may

be effort, status, time, or other intangible things. It is important to maximise the benefit and minimise the 'cost' of change to the audience.

C. audience analysis and segmentation strategies

Audience research is about identifying audience needs, costs and benefits of addressing needs, and formulation of a program that addresses needs in a cost-beneficial manner.

Audience segmentation is about identifying sub-groups with meaningful characteristics in common and then developing effective messages for them eg GPs in sole practice, GPs in group practice, GPs in a corporate practice, practice nurses or managers, Division of General Practice Boards.

Each segment should be relatively homogenous in regard to important variables.

Stages of Change is an important classification system for segmenting an audience.

Stages of Change example:

- Pre-contemplation – have not considered using EPC items
- Contemplation – have thought about it but not yet done so
- Preparation – have decided that it is a good idea and is planning how to go about it
- Action – using the EPC items but may become discouraged
- Maintenance – continued use of the EPC items for appropriate patients

The messages to individuals are different at each stage. The communication strategy should contain messages relevant to people at each of the 5 stages of change. The idea is to help people move stepwise through the stages of change and thereby increase the proportion of the population at the more advanced stages.

D. researching and testing messages

Formative research involves pre-testing ideas, messages, and methods with members of the relevant audience segments before the program is implemented. The techniques for doing this include: focus groups, intercept interviews, samples of convenience.

E. analysis of communication channels

Channels are the avenues through which messages are communicated. They may include

- newsletters
- email
- print information
- phone
- fax
- personal communication with a peer
- conversations with practice staff

- conversations with friends/colleagues
- etc

The purpose of channel analysis is to identify communication channels appropriate for the audience segment.

4. Communication strategy

Audiences (who will change)

- Who make up the different audience segments?
- What characteristics (relevant to communication) do members of an audience segment have in common?
- What are the perceived benefits and costs of change to the members of the audience segment?
- What do the audiences consider the most credible sources of information?
- What channels do they prefer for communication?

The objectives of the communication (the changes sought)

- What is to change – knowledge, behaviour, and attitude?
- Who will change and in what ways?
- By when will the change occur?

Channels and vehicles of communication (how you will communicate)

- Which channels of communication will you use?

Messages (content)

- What will be said?
- How will it be said?

Evaluation of the communication strategy

- What changes have occurred as a result of the communication?
- What improvements could be made to the communication strategy?
- What improvements could be made to the communication process?

Audience segments

The aim of this communication strategy is to increase the proportion of GPs in the catchment area who participate in the local care coordination systems for their patients.

Audience segments	Relevant characteristics	Stage(s) of change
A.		
B.		
C.		
D.		

Aim and Objectives

The **aim** of a communication strategy is the broad statement of **outcome** to be achieved through communication.

Example: The aim of this communication strategy is to increase the proportion of GPs in the catchment area who participate in the local care coordination systems for their patients.

The **objectives** of a communication strategy are specific statements about the anticipated **impacts** of particular elements of the communication strategy. Typically, an objective will include statements about:

- Who will change
- What will change
- Over what time the change will occur
- How you will know if the change has occurred.

Example: At the end of the three month period during which the weekly fax to general practices contains an announcement that the service directory is available from the Division, 30% of practices will have requested a copy.

Please prepare objectives for at least one audience segment.

Audience segments	Objectives
A.	
B.	
C.	
D.	

Issues for audience segments

Please identify the issues relevant to your chosen audience segment and proposed objectives

Audience segments		Benefits	Costs	Credible sources	Preferred channels
A.					
B.					
C.					
D.					

Message development

Audience segment:

What? (information conveyed)
So what? (Benefits)
Now what? (desirable action)

Tips

- Be positive
- Appeal to benefits
- Be lively
- Keep messages crisp and brief
- Be realistic
- Craft messages appropriate for the specific audience segment
- **Always** pre-test your message with people from the intended audience segment

Communication summary

Audience segment	Objective	Communication channel/vehicle	Message
A.			
B.			
C.			
D.			