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TIP SHEET #13



Social Marketing

Media plays an important role in social and behavioral change efforts. Social marketing is an application of business marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole. Social marketing can support and complement a media advocacy effort, and social marketing strategies can help an advocate develop advertising materials and messages that can build the support of the affected community and help get the attention of decision makers. Below are planning steps for use in developing a social marketing campaign.¹

1. Define the problem in your community and how it is manifested. For example:

- Spit tobacco can lead to disease and death. But the tobacco industry sponsors community rodeo events with sampling booths, scoreboard sponsoring, banner displays, and other activities.

2. Decide on the purpose of your overall advocacy campaign. Depending on how long your local project has been working on the issue and what kind of support is available from your steering committee, this could be to eliminate all tobacco sponsorship, or perhaps just to eliminate tobacco sampling. A clear purpose is essential for developing a media strategy.

3. Identify the priority audience for your marketing message. Since you probably do not have the resources to address all audiences or the “general public,” it is critical to focus on the audience that can make a difference. This may include decision makers such as rodeo organizers and business owners who accept tobacco sponsorship. You may also want to consider targeting people who can influence the decision makers, such as families who attend professional rodeos, students who attend college rodeos, and public health advocates. Your priority audience in a policy campaign is usually the decision makers.

4. Analyze your priority audience. Depending on your resources, explore via surveys, focus groups, observations, public records, media sources, and other sources what your audience *knows* and *believes*, and the *costs and benefits* of what they presently do related to the change you want to make. For example, if your priority audience is the rodeo organizers:

- Do they **believe** that the community supports tobacco sponsorship of their community rodeo event?
- Do they **know** that there may be alternative sponsors to the tobacco industry?
- Do the rodeo organizers believe that their acceptance of tobacco industry sponsorship money is an important **benefit** to the community and the rodeo? Do they think that the **cost** of losing tobacco industry sponsorship money will doom the rodeo? Are their assumptions accurate?

5. Set a long-term goal and short-term objectives for your marketing campaign. These are based on the analysis of your priority audience.

- Decide when you want to accomplish your goal.
- Decide what you want your priority audience **to know** (knowledge objective) such as “*the tobacco industry has been sponsoring rodeos and promoting its deadly spit tobacco product to our community for years.*”
- Decide what you want your priority audience **to believe** (belief objective) such as “*the rodeo organizers have a responsibility to the community to prohibit tobacco industry sponsorship of our community rodeo event.*”

One Buck Tobacco ad, which was placed in a local newspaper during the week before the local rodeo, includes a large photograph of a rodeo queen waving a flag and the headline “Don’t let spit tobacco giveaways stain our American family tradition.”

- Decide what you want your priority audience **to do** (behavior objective) such as “pass a written policy to reject tobacco sponsorship.” To pressure the rodeo organizers, your ad’s message to the community could be to “*call or write the rodeo organizers and tell them you want a tobacco-free rodeo policy.*”

6. Develop a marketing strategy. Design advertisements around the knowledge, belief, and behavior objectives you have identified for your priority audience.² For example, one Buck Tobacco ad, which was placed in a local newspaper during the week before the local rodeo, includes a large photograph of a rodeo queen waving a flag and the headline “Don’t let spit tobacco giveaways stain our American family tradition.” The ad explains why spit tobacco sponsorship of rodeos is problematic for the community and provides the name and contact information of a local group working to address the problem. It helps send a message to the priority audience (rodeo organizers and local community members who might be able to pressure them) that spit tobacco sponsorship is harmful (knowledge objective); that the cost of sponsorship to the community is greater than the benefit (belief objective); and that organizers should reject tobacco sponsorship (behavior objective).

7. Hire media professionals to help you develop and implement your communication strategy, if resources are available. For example, social marketing professionals:

- Know the radio and television stations and print publications that attract different demographic groups.
- Can help you develop logos and tag lines to promote your project.
- May have relationships with media people who can provide you with pro bono (free) media coverage.
- Can help you create a budget for strategic use of media.

¹ See *Resources* Tip Sheet for social marketing resources.

² Visit <http://www.bucktobacco.org/mediac> to see Buck Tobacco’s media materials, including sample print and radio ads.