

Effective Campaigning on a Modest Budget

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Effective public health communication campaigns encompass much more than creating engaging health messages and eye-catching images. To be successful (i.e. raise awareness, increase knowledge, shape attitudes, or change behavior among individuals and groups), campaign planners must address the multiple levels of influence that impact attributes of both people and place.^{1,2} They must identify the most salient current influences on behavior, such as cognitions, social norms or lack of access,^{3,4} and respond to them in a systematic fashion by applying a variety of communication techniques to develop and implement the campaign. Conducting formative research and audience segmentation, engaging the community, and developing a communication mix with sufficient message reach and frequency are some of the techniques that practitioners should take into account with when planning a health communication campaign. Moreover, using a combination of communication channels such as interpersonal communication and mass media may be able to reinforce campaign concepts and messages for more likely absorption and retention by target audiences.

In other words, a comprehensive approach to a health communication campaign, which looks at attributes of both people and place,

and uses a variety of techniques to influence these attributes, is the best way to ensure a campaign achieves its goals. Yet, with campaign resources often limited, practitioners are often forced to use a limited set of communication tools for their campaign. The case study entitled *Reconsidering the Motorcycle Safety Campaign*, offers insight into how to do this well despite resource constraints. Why specific public health communication tools were used, how they informed the campaign, and the authors' reflective insights about the experience, provide lessons learned for practitioners who want to know what constitutes a comprehensive health communications campaign on a university campus.

This case offers a particularly dramatic example of the benefits of conducting formative research and a needs assessment as the initial steps of campaign planning. It quickly becomes evident that had this research not been conducted, the campaign team would have used messages and promotional materials that would not have resonated, and may actually have offended, some audience members. Furthermore, the formative research helped planners understand that in order to improve motorcycle safety, broad environmental changes are necessary; simply targeting motorcycle riders is not sufficient.

The research allowed planners to identify three target audience segments in order to help them achieve their objectives and goals. Many other details about specific communications techniques and their effectiveness in developing this campaign can be found by reading the full case study in this issue of the journal.

While the results described in *Reconsidering the Motorcycle Safety Campaign* can be

thought of as preliminary, as the campaign is still in its inaugural year, it nicely illustrates how much can be accomplished with few resources when a systematic and comprehensive approach is creatively applied to campaign design and implementation.

Available at: http://www.casesjournal.org/volume1/editorial/cases_1_02.cfm

References

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