This guide, developed by The Health Communication Unit (THCU) at the Centre for Health Promotion University of Toronto, provides a hands-on 12-step process to developing health communication campaigns (see Figure 1 on p.3). Each chapter is created according to the steps, with information on what the step is, why it’s important and what’s required to carry it out.

DEFINITION OF COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

Comprehensive communication campaigns:

- are goal-oriented attempts to inform, persuade or motivate behaviour change;
- are ideally aimed at the individual, network, organizational and societal levels;
- are aimed at a relatively large, well-defined audience (i.e., they are not interpersonal persuasion on a one-to-one or one-to-few level);
- provide non-commercial benefits to the individual and/or society;
- occur during a given time period, which may range from a few weeks (e.g., traffic information for an upcoming holiday weekend) to many years (e.g., Health Canada’s anti-tobacco media campaigns);
- are most effective when they include a combination of media, interpersonal and community events; and,
- involve an organized set of communication activities. At a minimum, this involves message production and distribution.

This definition is based on:

Three Approaches to Communication—
Media, Interpersonal Communication, and Events

A combination of media, interpersonal communication, and events has been found to be most effective in communicating health information. These three main types of communication work together to reinforce each other in the following ways:

- Media are an appropriate approach for certain objectives of communication campaigns, but not all. For instance, limited involvement or interaction is only possible through mass media. For this reason, a combination of mass media and interpersonal communication tends to be more effective. Interpersonal communication often flows from media messages, as opinion leaders and others share what they have learned, endorse messages, and otherwise enhance the impact of the media activities.

- Interpersonal communication allows for much greater participation where interaction and feedback are required. It is often enhanced by the use of audio-visual aids, props and other forms of multimedia.

- Events combine both media and interpersonal communication and are often promoted and reported on through the media (e.g., news and features). Events are designed to be newsworthy. For this reason, media coverage is a key objective and indicator of success. This type of combined approach reaches large numbers of people but also provides opportunities for participation through interpersonal communication.
12 Steps Involved in Developing a Communication Campaign

Figure 1 outlines THCU's 12-step model for developing health communication campaigns. Subsequent chapters of this workbook explore each step in turn.

Figure 1
Health Communication Action Steps

1. Get Started
2. Revisit Your Health Promotion Strategy
3. Analyze and Segment Audiences
4. Develop Inventory of Communication Resources
5. Set Communication Objectives
6. Select Vehicles and Channels
7. Combine and Sequence Communication Activities
8. Develop the Message Strategy
9. Develop a Project Identity
10. Develop Materials
11. Implement Your Campaign
12. Complete Campaign

TCHU provides provincial and regional workshops, consultations and resource materials, that relate specifically to all of these steps.
A RATIONALE FOR HEALTH COMMUNICATION

This section provides a rationale for communication within the field of health promotion. It describes important relationships between health communication and key health promotion concepts—particularly community organization and comprehensive, multi-level approaches. It’s been discovered that when communication and community organization are used together, each is strengthened. A combination of these strategies enhances our work in health promotion. (Please refer to Figure 2 and the Glossary.)
Community Organization Strengthens Health Communication

By applying the principles of community organization to communication, our work is strengthened. For example:

- Pure communication practices tend to be persuasion- and marketing-oriented. However, communication that is combined with community organization helps define, reflect community values, and create a sense of ownership towards significant issues in a community;
- Community organization strategies also enhance the credibility of a health communication project or activity. Involving community-based spokespersons in a campaign increases credibility with the media, other gatekeepers and the public.

Health Communication Strengthens Community Organization

Health communication strengthens community organization by

- increasing knowledge, which is essential to gaining power. Power, as the ability to take control of and improve matters, is a desired outcome of community organization;
- increasing the size, diversity, and strength of the bonds within networks such as coalitions;
- developing an understanding of complex issues such as broad determinants of health; and,
- providing the most practical, achievable, immediate activities for community groups to pursue.

Health Communication and Community Organization Support Health Promotion

A combination of community organization and health communication facilitates comprehensive multi-level health promotion by

- providing education at the individual, network, organizational and societal levels;
- influencing public opinion and other forms of advocacy, essential to creating a climate for policy change; and,
- enhancing networks and social support, which are key elements of environmental support.
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

Empirical Evidence Supporting the Effectiveness of Mass Media Communication Campaigns

Mass media campaign evaluations were reviewed to determine their impact on awareness, information seeking, knowledge, attitude, behavioural intention and behaviour. All quantitative evaluations of U.S. health campaigns published since 1980 were included in this review. Impacts were found in the following areas:

Awareness all 15 evaluations reported changes in awareness. Simple recognition of messages was 46% (median). Increases in awareness before and after campaigns averaged about 25%.

Information Seeking mass media campaigns were generally successful in getting people to seek information, mainly through telephone information and referral services.

Knowledge 14 evaluations found impacts on knowledge. When we can be sure that the intended audience is exposed to the campaign, dramatic increases (as great as 60%) can occur. When exposure is not guaranteed but a campaign saturates a community, knowledge gains of about 10% are more likely.

Attitudes all but two of 16 evaluations found significant improvement in attitudes post-campaign. When exposure was guaranteed, as much as a 38% change in attitude was reported. In general, attitude change was modest.

Behavioural Intentions only three of seven evaluations reporting on changes in behavioural intentions showed clear evidence of change. Intention to change ranged widely from 19% to 73%.

Behaviour of 29 evaluations assessing behaviour change, 20 were successful and just 9 unsuccessful. The median change in those rigorously evaluated was 29%, with a range of 4% to 74%.

The Limitation of Communication Campaigns Done in Isolation of Other Strategies

When applied on their own—without complementary strategies such as community mobilization—the ability of some health communication campaigns to effect change is limited. In particular, a large body of evidence suggests that health communication campaigns relying exclusively on media appeals are not a sufficient means of changing attitudes and behaviour. In some contrast to the meta-analysis found on this page, recent review of 24 published evaluations of health promotion programs revealed that media-alone interventions had little impact on behaviour (Redman, Spencer and Sanson-Fisher, 1990).
Seven Necessary Conditions for Successful and Effective Campaigns

1. Develop high-quality messages, sources and channels through needs assessment, applied theory and formative research

2. Disseminate the ‘stimuli’ to intended audiences, frequently and consistently, over a sustained period

3. Attract the attention of the potential receivers

4. Encourage favourable interpersonal communication about the issue

5. Change the awareness, knowledge, and/or behaviours of individuals

6. Cause societal change with supplemental community and government changes

7. Use summative evaluation to accumulate a systematic knowledge about the conditions of maximum impact

Based on:

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Components of Effective Health Communication Campaigns—a Checklist

This checklist summarizes state-of-the-art knowledge in health communication campaigns research. It is based on a recent review of the literature and interviews with 29 leading scholars and practitioners. We have organized their findings according to our 12 step model. The effective health communication campaign:

Steps 1 & 2: Get Started
- Revisit Your Health Promotion Strategy
  - involves key power figures and groups in mass media organizations and in government bodies in its design and implementation
  - uses commercial marketing and social marketing strategies to increase effectiveness

Step 3: Audience Analysis and Segmentation
- carefully targets or segments the audience it is intended to reach
- segments audiences using psychographic variables based on attitudes, values and beliefs, since demographic segmentation has been found to be relatively ineffective
- uses formative evaluation techniques to appraise and improve approaches during planning and in implementation
- uses pretesting to ensure messages have the expected effects on priority audiences
- addresses the existing knowledge and beliefs of priority audiences that are impeding adoption of desired behaviours

Step 5: Set Goals and Objectives
- sets fairly modest, attainable goals for behaviour change
- addresses the larger social, structural and environmental factors influencing the health problems being addressed by the campaign or activity

Step 6: Select Channels and Vehicles
- uses multiple media (TV, radio, print, etc.)
- combines mass media approaches with community, small group and individual activities
- uses celebrities to attract public attention to a health communication issue
- embeds a health communication message in an entertainment program
- is coordinated with direct service delivery components (e.g., hotline numbers for information or counselling) so that immediate follow-through can take place if behaviour change begins to occur

Adapted from:
Backer, T.E., Rogers, E.M. and Soporty, P.
Definition, Rationale and Effectiveness of Comprehensive Communication Campaigns

Introduction

- directs messages to people linked to the priority audience, especially those with interpersonal influence such as peers and parents
- chooses positive role models for social learning carefully, as these individuals may become negative role models through their actions
- combines public service announcements (PSAs) with other campaign activities since PSAs alone generally do not effectively bring about behaviour change
- uses the news media as a means of increasing visibility
- uses government as a source of funding and appropriate leadership on controversial issues

- repeats a single message
- carefully considers timing (e.g., when health communication activities are introduced, what other events are happening during their implementation, etc.)

- emphasizes positive behaviour change rather than the negative consequences of current behaviour (fear arousal is rarely successful as a campaign strategy)
- couples fear appeals (when used) with mechanisms for reducing the anxiety they create
- emphasizes current rewards rather than the avoidance of distant negative consequences
- communicates incentives or benefits for adopting desired behaviours that build on existing motives, needs and values of the priority audiences
- focuses priority audiences' attention on immediate, high probability consequences of healthy behaviour

- makes deliberate efforts to resolve potential conflicts between evaluation researchers and message creators

Step 7:
Combine and Sequence Your Activities

Step 8:
Develop the Message

Step 12:
Complete Campaign