



Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Social Marketing

Bret Shaw, PhD
Department of Life Sciences Communication
UW Extension & Environmental Resource Center
University of Wisconsin-Madison

May 21, 2008

Human Behavior & the Environment



- Widespread empirical evidence that human behavior is harming the environment
- Despite strong science about these associations, and clear recommendations for how to reduce our impact, people often continue daily activities with “business as usual” approach
- Communicating scientifically supported reasons for changing behavior is important but simple education is often not sufficient to change behaviors as needed

Social Marketing & the Environment



- Awareness about disconnect between knowledge and behavior influencing environmental communications to try community-based social marketing
- Social marketing =
 - “a program planning process that promotes voluntary behavior of target audiences by offering benefits they want, reducing barriers they are concerned about and using persuasion to motivate their participation in program activity.”

5-Step Process for CBSM



1. Select specific behavior you want people to engage in.
2. Identify perceived **barriers** and **benefits** of engaging in both the current and preferred behavior.
3. Develop creative strategies to overcome barriers and enhance the benefits of the preferred behavior using a set of tools designed to modify behavior.
4. Conduct a pilot study to adjust the use of tools.
5. Broadly implement the CBSM program.

Basics of Segmentation



- Divide population into groups whose members are more like each other than members of other segments
- Segmentation concepts: demographics, psychographics, values and lifestyles, zip codes, geographic regions, behavior....
- “Differential responsiveness” most crucial criterion
- Prioritize segment with highest incremental response to marketing effort

Level of Issue Involvement



- Refers to degree of importance that an issue or behavior generates in different individuals
 - Antagonistic, ambiguous, or supportive
- Involvement often dictates whether individual is passive vs. active relative to communications
 - e.g. Web may be more beneficial for active information seekers

Stakeholders



- People upon whom an issue has a consequence
 - Property owners
 - Chamber of commerce
 - Sportsmen/women
 - Conservationist
 - Tourism advocates
 - Legislators

Picking a Behavior: Example 1



■ Lake Ripley

- Started with 13 behaviors that could have an impact on lake quality if performed on community-wide basis (e.g., lawn fertilizer, riparian buffers, plant native trees, rain barrels)
- Developed list to rank behaviors (e.g., size of target population, repeated vs. one-time behavior, absence of serious external barriers and potential for incentives)
- Selected highest scoring behavior

Picking a Behavior: Example 2



- Long & Des Moines Lakes: Burnette Co.
 - Employ experienced lake and other natural resource managers to offer recommendations for CBSM behavior
 - Toured lakes with DNR resource managers (lakes coordinator, fisheries manager, wildlife manager and water resource biologist)
 - Asked them to view the lake and discuss what they thought landowners could do (like an onboard focus group) to protect the lake

Encourage Commitment



- Public commitment increases likelihood of compliance with requests
- Act of commitment alters how people see themselves
- Written commitments more effective than verbal
- Making commitment public or within group increases effectiveness

Prompts



- Explicit instructions needed
 - “Use phosphorous free fertilizer” not “Reduce phosphorous use”
 - ‘Turn off lights’ not ‘Save electricity’
- Prompt placed as close in time or space as possible to target behavior
 - Sticker on fertilizer applicator?
- Point of purchase
 - No phosphorous fertilizer
 - Rain garden plants

Norms



- Human tendency to look toward others to help guide behavior
- Effectiveness depends on people internalizing norms – i.e., norm is how people ‘should’ behave
- Examples: Block leaders, distributing normative info, existing groups

Creating Effective Messages



- Captivating information
 - Vivid, concrete and personalized
- Know audience – get feedback
- Credible source
- Modeling
- Enhance social diffusion
- Framing
 - “Land protection agreement” not “conservation easement”

Incentives and Barriers



- Incentives

- Financial, social approval, feeling good about self

- Barriers

- Financial, knowledge, convenience

Social Marketing: Pros and Cons



- Intuitive appeal driven by focus on behavior over other softer outcomes such as knowledge or attitudes
- Hodge-podge of tools like giving somebody a toolbox to build a house
- Social marketing is process more than theory
- Conceptual models can provide more structured guidance for implementation
- Scientifically replicable
- Scalable

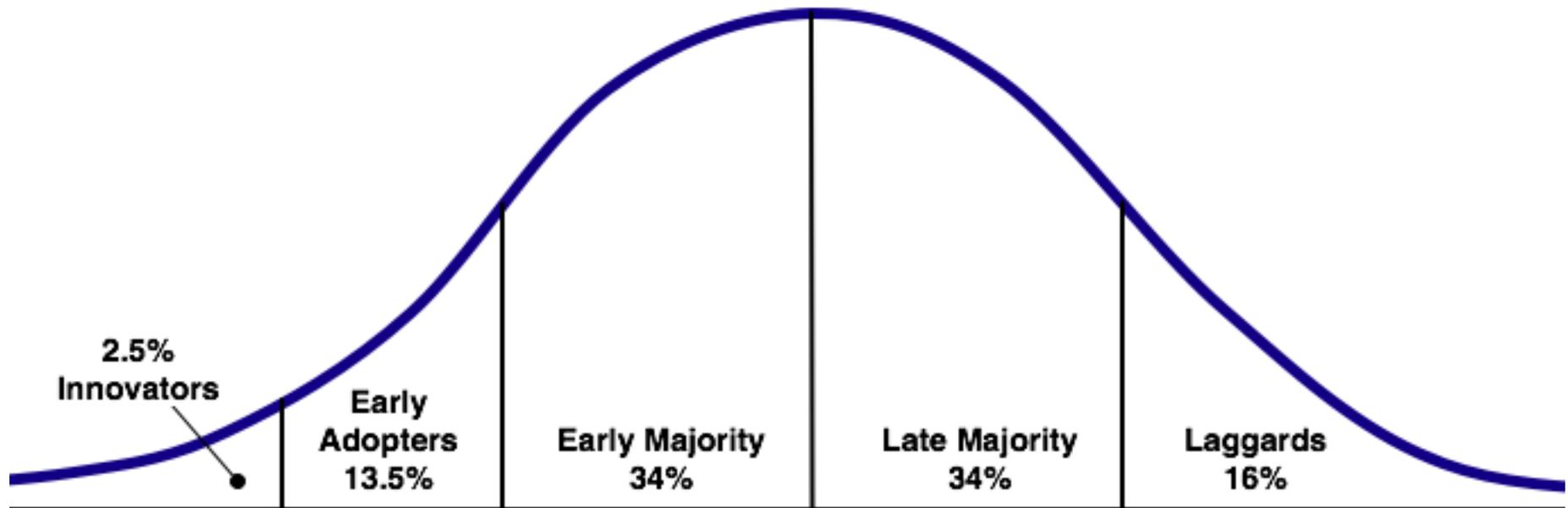
Temporally Oriented Models



- The idea of behavior change typically implies a phenomena occurring over time
- However.....behavior change is often discussed as if it's a discrete event rather than a process
- Diffusion of Innovations and Stages of Change models have received attention in health and agricultural practices but not so much for influencing environmental behaviors



Diffusion of Innovations: Understanding Adoption Curves



Source: Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* model

Innovator Characteristics



- Venturesome, highly interested in new ideas
- Driven by starting new movements
- Often interact outside of local peer networks – communicate with others who care deeply about environmental issues
- Sometimes adopt behaviors that make them seem ahead of times while other practices may ultimately appear to be less well founded

Early Adopter Characteristics



- Serve as opinion leaders in peer groups
- More integrated into their communities than innovators
- Tend to want to do “right thing” – respected due to judicious adoption of new ideas
- Most important to win over for new practice
- Decrease uncertainty of others by conveying subjective evaluations of the practice

Early Majority Characteristics



- Adopts new ideas just before average citizen
- May interact frequently with peers but seldom opinion leaders in social networks
- Practical – may want to see proof that new practice makes a difference
- Strategies may include recruiting leaders in early adopter segment as models or raising visibility about prevalence of others who have adopted practice

Late Majority Characteristics



- Less favorable view toward science
- Lower education, SES
- Not part of self identity to adopt behaviors ahead of others
- Social norms toward behavior may have to be pretty obvious

Laggards



- Last to adopt new practice
- Suspicious of innovations and people promoting change
- Possibly even antagonistic
- Regulation or strong social pressure may be necessary

Diffusion of Innovations

Implications for Social Marketing



- Adoption of a new behavior may be expected to follow a relatively predictable trajectory
- Earlier adopters tend to have different characteristics than later adopters
- Unique messages and strategies may be crafted for different segments

Transtheoretical Model: Stages of Change



- Roots in explaining health behavior but may be helpful for explaining any behavior change
 - Precontemplation: Individual part of problem (recognized or not) and no intention of changing.
 - Contemplation: Individual recognizes problem and seriously thinking about changing.
 - Preparation for Action: Individual recognizes problem and intends to change behavior soon.
 - Action: Individual has enacted consistent behavior change (i.e., sweeping fertilizer) for < 6 months
 - Maintenance: Individual maintains behavior for > 6 months

Precontemplator Characteristics



- Uninformed or under informed about the consequences of their behavior
- Information alone may not produce behavior change but relevant information can lead to change where lack of knowledge is a barrier to action
- Example:
 - Many people have no idea that flushing pharmaceuticals down toilet or sink has negative effects

Contemplator Characteristics



- People intending to change
- Aware of pros and cons of changing, but cons may still be persistently winning out in their minds
- Balance between costs/benefits of adopting new behavior produces ambivalence that can keep members stuck in stage
- Focus is shifting decisional balance so pros of adopting behavior clearly outweigh cons

Preparation Characteristics



- Aware of problem, intend to change
- Educated about benefits but need extra push to trigger adoption
- Example:
 - To promote sales of compact fluorescent bulbs, Wal-Mart moved product from bottom shelf to eye level resulting in sales increases
 - Direct mail coupons for rain garden plants, in-store promotions no phosphorous fertilizer
 - Community event to restore shoreline

Action Characteristics



- People have made specific overt modifications in their lifestyles
- Acknowledge success while recognizing monitoring is necessary
- Example:
 - As each bulb goes out, people won't fully adopt desired behavior at once
 - Track energy/money savings along with reductions in carbon output as people switch traditional bulbs out for to more energy type

Maintenance Characteristics



- People working to prevent return to old behavior
- No longer involved as actively in the deliberative processes associated with the precontemplation or action phases
- Reminders may be used about benefits that have accrued at individual and community levels from people committing to behaviors

Relapse Characteristics



- Return from earlier stage
- Comparable to smoking cigarette after quitting or drinking after abstinence
- Falling back to old behaviors
 - Driving a car rather than bike or public transportation, flushing medicine
 - Relapse common but people seldom fall all the way back to earlier stages
 - Follow-up, reinforce incentives, reduce barriers

Conclusion



- Models not mutually exclusive
- Presented for heuristic value to think about behavior change on temporal dimension
- Whether process viewed as occurring in series of stages that are qualitatively different or along adjacent segments of an underlying continuum not the point
- People variously motivated
- Natural progression has implications for timing and strategy of campaigns

Maintenance Characteristics



- People working to prevent return to old behavior
- No longer involved as actively in the deliberative processes associated with the precontemplation or action phases
- Reminders may be used about benefits that have accrued at individual and community levels from people committing to behaviors

Evaluation



- Environmental response
- Modeling
- Behavioral response
- Surveys
- Experiments
- Qualitative feedback

Ethical Questions



- Goals determined by bottom-up or top-down process?
- Intervention targeted narrowly to a specific audience or broadly to whole populations?
- Interest group actively involved in creating information or passive consumer of information?

Ethical Questions



- Goals determined by bottom-up or top-down process?
- Intervention targeted narrowly to a specific audience or broadly to whole populations?
- Interest group actively involved in creating information or passive consumer of information?

Downstream vs. upstream focus?



- Downstream focused on target audiences exhibiting problem behaviors
- Upstream focuses on fixing structures and processes that caused the problem in the first place
- For example, do we focus on getting people to reduce phosphorous fertilizers or on banning availability?

Thank you for attending.....



- Questions?
- Contact info:
Bret Shaw
brshaw@wisc.edu
608-890-1878