Effectively engaging people

Interviews with social marketing experts

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About The NSMC

Established by the Department of Health in England and the National Consumer Council in 2006, we are a centre of excellence for social marketing and behaviour change.

Our mission is to maximise the effectiveness of behaviour change programmes.

We do this for a growing list of public sector organisations through a broad range of strategic analysis, advice, support and training across all levels of the social marketing process.

World leaders in our field, we draw on expertise from the UK, USA, Europe, Asia and the Pacific and adapt it to meet the needs of UK and international audiences.
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Introduction

At the first Social Marketing World Conference in September 2008, we brought together the leading thinkers and practitioners in the sector. Two years on, we still feel that social marketers should promote best practice and develop the evidence base. We know that social marketing works, and we must continue to work to convince policy makers to produce people-centred programmes and strategies. We hope that the wealth of social marketing expertise we present here will help. Luminaries such as Philip Kotler are joined by a host of expert voices from the social marketing world. We are delighted to bring you interviews with Bill Novelli, Jay Bernhardt, Sue Peattie and Alan Andreasen, among many others. We have also included a resource centre, where you can find details of all publications, articles and resources referred to by our contributors.

We hope you will enjoy such diverse opinions as Iain Potter’s views on the challenge of collaboration, Stephen Dann’s call to arms to the marketing profession, Rowena Merritt on the dilution of social marketing in England – and Bill Novelli’s favourite haiku!

Welcome to the new edition of ‘Effectively Engaging People’.

John Bromley
Director, The NSMC
How did you become involved in social marketing?
I read Philip Kotler’s book, ‘Marketing Management’, in graduate school. It proclaimed that marketing can contribute to the quality of life - that it can be used to influence public behaviours that will contribute to alleviating social issues. Then, as marketing director of our region’s children’s hospital, developed a campaign to increase use of life vests among children. I fell in love with marketing behaviours and decided that’s what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

What is social marketing?
Social marketing is a distinct marketing discipline, one that has been labelled as such since the early 1970s. It is focused on influencing behaviours for good – ones that will improve health, prevent injuries, protect the environment, and contribute to communities. Fundamental principles at the core of this practice have been used to help reduce tobacco use; decrease infant mortality; stop the spread of HIV/AIDS; make wearing bike helmets a social norm; decrease littering; increase recycling; and persuade pet owners to licence their pets and ‘scoop their poop’.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Focus on a single, simple, doable behaviour and understand what barriers your target audience has to adopting it.

How can we build capacity in social marketing?
Make it a required or core course for degrees in public health, social work, public administration, political science, environmental studies – maybe even medical school.

Social marketing increasingly encompasses people from both marketing and the social sciences.

What are the challenges in bringing together the expertise?
The challenge is that those without a marketing background are often not comfortable or familiar with the other three crucial tools in the marketing mix: product, price and place. My experience has been that many come with a bias against commercial marketing, primarily because they are equating marketing with sales and advertising, which they find annoying at best.

What advice would you give to an organisation with limited funds to invest in a social marketing intervention?
• Do a pilot
• Look for partners who do have funding and have something in it for them to support the effort
• Use social media channels
• Before spending money on new creative development, consider existing campaign materials and branding that you might be able to borrow or ‘tweak’, to make it your own

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
‘Fostering Sustainable Behavior’ by Doug McKenzie-Mohr and Bill Smith.
How did you become involved in social marketing?
As part of increased controls on tobacco promotions in New Zealand, the HSC was tasked, during the 1990s, with replacing tobacco sponsorships and promoting health. In taking over a number of prominent tobacco sponsorships, my staff and I gained considerable insight into how tobacco companies made the most of sponsorships to market their products. This led us into the marketing world and the discovery of literature on social marketing. From approximately 1995, it became the way we frame our thinking and programmes.

What is social marketing?
It is the application of the skills, experience and practices of the commercial sector to the achievement of social, environmental and health benefits. At its core is the necessity to provide ‘offerings’ to consumers that meet their needs and expectations and recognise their contexts. There is therefore a profound need to understand what those needs, expectations and contexts are.

What one thing have you learnt that you wish you knew 20 years ago?
That money spent on research (and research personnel) gaining consumer understanding is the most important part of your programme. It should not be bypassed in favour of ‘doing’.

If you had to choose a single example of social marketing to highlight its potential, what would it be?
I am tempted to say tobacco control, but in reality this has included many, many elements, including campaigns addressing quitting, second hand smoke, youth initiation, smokefree environments and so on. However, the total shift in attitudes and prevalence in New Zealand is a great example of what can be achieved. For example, the 2006 to 2007 New Zealand Health Survey shows that...
the prevalence of smoking has decreased – from 25.2 per cent in 1996 to 1997 to 19.9 per cent in 2006 to 2007. The decline over this period was evident for both men and women.

In alcohol moderation, I very much liked the ‘Host Responsibility’ campaign undertaken by The Alcohol Advisory Council in the mid-1990s. It’s an example of positive change that linked to and involved the commercial sector.

What are the most challenging aspects of creating a social marketing intervention?
Developing the ‘offering’, or product. We tend to offer a range of communications that provide hope, a threat, support, information and persuasion. But they are short on tangible offerings - things like a quitline or making NRT (nicotine replacement treatments) available, walking buses (children walking to school in groups), recycling bins and so on.

These are actions that are enabled by providing something, as opposed to ‘don’t drink and drive’ and ‘eat more fruit and vegetables’, messages that only inform. We need to find better alternatives to the problems we are aiming to counter, and find strategic alliances that take us beyond the health and social sectors.

What other question should we have asked?
A major challenge in implementing social marketing campaigns is the general need to work in collaborative arrangements, where risk is not a comfortable concept. Unlike the commercial sector, we generally don’t have a network we can command. We instead rely on a series of intermediaries and stakeholders, each of whom has their own needs and expectations (and are in need of being understood, just like the end consumer).

This makes the planning and implementation of a programme a much longer and more difficult process than it is in a command and control structure. When it works it produces great results, but it requires much facilitation, cooperation, negotiation and patience. Related to this in terms of taking risks, the government sector usually aims to reduce risk. In doing so, it sometimes misses opportunities or designs something so risk-free that it has little benefit.
Prof. Gerard Hastings

Director, Institute for Social Marketing, University of Stirling, Scotland, www.ism.stir.ac.uk

How did you become involved in social marketing?
It goes back a long way - over 25 years - when I took a research assistant position at the University of Strathclyde’s advertising research unit. It was then funded by the Scottish Health and Education Group, a government agency doing health promotion. We pre-tested campaign advertisements, everything from rickets to obesity, which gave me a very good insight.

One thing that was very apparent at that time was that communications alone were insufficient to effect behaviour change: other levers were necessary. At the end of the 1980s, the head of the unit, Douglas Leather, died. I took over and ended up running it by default. There was a lot of reorganisation going on, and we had to create a business plan for the research centre which resulted in a far wider range of clients. It was very beneficial, because it made us think about what we were trying to achieve.

We changed title to the Centre of Social Marketing in the early 1990s, broadening our client base.

What is social marketing?
In the UK, I think we are trying to do the same job as Tesco, but in the social sector. People are very familiar with how marketing works in the commercial sector. They now understand terms like ‘brands’. When I started, people in public health did not know what brands were. I would ask them to tell me about marketing and I would say that is what social marketing is, but in a social context. I would ask audiences to think about what they bought recently and think and talk about it. It is a very engaging and lively topic of discussion. We are very much a consumer society.

Social marketing increasingly encompasses people from both marketing and the social sciences.

What are the challenges in bringing together the expertise?
In reply, I’ll mention the old Churchill quote about the British and Americans being divided by a common language. People don’t mean the same thing. There are land mines to be looked out for. For example, it could trigger a degree of professional jealousy, particularly if people think it could supersede public health. But what it does do is bring insights to interested practitioners, like GPs. They have to be everything to everyone, and as they build relationships with people in the community, they can be great social marketers.

If you were trapped in a lift for ten minutes with the Prime Minister, what would you ask him?
I would tell him that there is a lot to learn from Tesco about influencing behaviour, and that partnerships are the way forward, the way to pull people together to get some action to improve public health. I would try and sell him the idea of having a semi-independent organisation headed by someone like Sir John Krebbbs, a key scientist and independent thinker. This would pull together key stakeholders on an equal footing, like the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK, on a ten to 25 year basis, and with an agreed budget. The aim would be to improve public health by getting people more engaged.

What one thing have you learnt that you wish you knew 20 years ago?
People are people. They are complex and do stupid things but this doesn’t mean they are stupid.
How did you become involved in social marketing?
I co-founded Porter Novelli, a firm designed to apply marketing to health and social issues. This was back in 1972, and we were making it up as we went along. It wasn’t until I encountered Phil Kotler, Alan Andreasen and Paul Bloom that I discovered the new field of social marketing. They were developing theories and frameworks for a new (or derivative) discipline, and I was an in-the-trenches practitioner. It was a good combination.

What is social marketing?
It is the application of marketing principles and practices to positive social change, to improve society and enhance the health and/or social status of individuals within society.

What one thing have you learnt that you wish you knew 20 years ago?
Back then my focus was largely on individual behaviour change. I also realised that environmental change (especially of social norms) was necessary. But I did not appreciate the value of social policy to both environmental and individual change. Now I do.

Why should limited resources go to social marketing programmes, rather than to reducing a budget deficit or to other tools?
It depends on the social problem and what is needed to solve it. There are times when budget deficits must be addressed. But for the long term, social change is often necessary. For example, in the U.S., our healthcare spending is unsustainable and our healthcare system is broken. If we don’t engage in comprehensive, strategic health promotion and disease prevention, anything else will just be stopgap measures and will postpone the inevitable.

If you had to choose a single example of social marketing to highlight its potential, what would it be?
Tobacco control in the U.S. It is working, and brings into play all the components of marketing, plus legal, regulatory and legislative advocacy.

What are the most challenging aspects of creating a social marketing intervention?
There are many, including: insightful research; creative messages; dealing effectively with coalitions and partnerships; organising resources; surviving the politics (often dealing with governments); and good evaluation. But the biggest problem is usually resource acquisition, to begin and sustain the intervention at the appropriate scale, over the needed timeframe.

What are you most proud to have achieved in social marketing?
I am proud of having contributed to the genesis and development of the discipline; to having succeeded with a number of programmes; and especially to have mentored many outstanding individuals who are successful practitioners today.

What other question should we have asked?
Should social marketers be aggressive and be risk takers? YES. There’s no other way to tackle the tough, intractable problems we face. My favourite haiku is: ‘Problems worthy of attack, prove their worth by attacking back’.

Bill Novelli
Former Chief Executive, AARP and Distinguished Professor of the Practice, McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University, USA
www.aarp.org  msb.georgetown.edu
How did you become involved in social marketing?
During the placement year of my first degree, I worked as a Marketing Officer for a mental health charity. I had the idea to use what I had learnt in my marketing lectures to try and increase the number of people with depression seeking treatment and complying with their treatment plans. In my final year of university, I wrote a proposal to further this idea at PhD level. During my PhD studies, Philip Kotler bought out his book on social marketing – my ‘green bible’, as I used to call it. After reading it, I suddenly realised that my idea was in fact nothing new! It was great to discover a whole group of people in America doing the same work as me.

What is social marketing?
I would say that it is just commercial marketing techniques, but instead of making profit for a company or increasing brand recognition, social marketing is done for ‘social good’. Of course, ‘for a social or public good’ raises ethical questions – who is defining the social good?

The model of social marketing we use in England seems more aligned to health promotion, whereas the model I used to use was more aligned to commercial marketing (the US model). For anyone who has worked in the commercial marketing world (and I don’t mean just in the communications and advertising side of things), I am sure they would say that marketing is different from health promotion. But in England, I feel we have diluted social marketing and lost some of the elements that make it effective.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Marketing considers all the ‘four Ps’ – don’t even think about your promotional strategy until you have a product that the target audience will value, at the correct price, and in a convenient place. Then promote that offering.

Also, think about your supply chain. You would never have a commercial company selling their products in an outlet where they did not know how many of their target audience shopped there. Focus your efforts on the outlets where your target audience go. Don’t waste your efforts, say, training up a GP to screen young people for STIs if the GP only sees a few young people a week; go to the GP who sees 100. Know your footfall!

How can we promote social marketing to practitioners and decision-makers?
I have lost count of the number of times I am asked to comment on ‘social marketing interventions’ which are simply advertising campaigns aimed at raising awareness and increasing knowledge. I think more training is desperately needed at the workforce and senior management levels, so people can fully understand what social marketing is, but just as importantly, what it is not!
How can we build capacity in social marketing?
For long-term sustainable capacity development, I think integrating social marketing modules into academic courses is vital. Social marketing should be a key element on a variety of courses: public health masters, undergraduate and postgraduate business and marketing courses, and medical and nursing degrees.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
Kotler et al. 2002 – it is a fabulous book from the original social marketing guru, and has great examples which illustrate social marketing clearly.

If you were trapped in a lift for ten minutes with the Prime Minister, what would you ask him?
I would ask the Prime Minister to see the difference between setting a strategic objective and the tactical means of achieving it. While the former is the role of government, I believe the latter is the province of the professional in the relevant field. I would also ask him not to constantly set short term targets, since these can divert attention from the long term strategy, and thus interfere with the professionals in their attempts to achieve the objective.

“Focus your efforts on the outlets where your target audience go. Don’t waste your efforts, say, training up a GP to screen young people for STIs if the GP only sees a few young people a week; go to the GP who sees 100. Know your footfall!”
How did you become involved in social marketing?
I came from community organising and was frustrated by the dependence on charismatic leadership and the lack of measurable success. And yes, I needed a job. There was one available in social marketing. I had never heard of it until the job announcement. I was young and inexperienced and thought I knew everything, but social marketing was a wonderful way to learn about people.

What is social marketing?
I still think the ‘four Ps’ are the simplest and best description. Social marketing is about creating products and services that help people solve social problems. Then it prices, places and promotes those products and services in ways that motivate their widespread and correct use. It’s a practical and very effective way of tapping into people’s legitimate self-interest (not selfishness) to influence their behaviour for everyone’s benefit. You cannot understand social marketing unless you understand the difference between self-interest and selfishness. Self-interest is often defined in social marketing as consumer orientation.

Recognising that social marketing is understood (and misunderstood) in a range of ways, The NSMC developed the eight-point Social marketing benchmark criteria, building on previous work by Alan Andreasen. How useful do you find them?
I think they are helpful as checklist for experienced marketers. Methods mix is important because too often we focus on promotion only. Insight seems a bit redundant with customer orientation, but it’s helpful to stress that point. I’m
not crazy about the discussion of behaviour because it opens itself to this nonsense about ‘individual behaviour versus social behaviour’. All behaviour is individual. There are powerful social influences, but they still influence individual behaviour. I prefer to talk about this as internal and external influences on behaviour. This is so hard to get people to understand. My favourites in the list are exchange and competition, because I think they are new ideas social marketing brings to the social change table.

**Social marketing increasingly encompasses people from both marketing and the social sciences. What are the challenges in bringing together the expertise?**

Social marketing, like commercial marketing, is an eclectic practice. It assimilates other professions. That is one of its greatest strengths. As long as the goal is voluntary behaviour change on a large scale, I am very open about tactics. I worry more about missed opportunities, when people come to social marketing from long careers in advertising, health promotion or environmental education, or even advocacy, and don’t understand what else marketing can bring to the table.

**What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?**

There are so many. It depends on your goal. As an introduction, I like the materials that The NSMC has developed.

If you’re looking for managerial insight, I like ‘Reinventing Government’ by Osborn and Gaebler.

If you want practical everyday advice you can use on Monday, ‘Made to Stick’ by Heath and Heath is one of my favourites.

**What other question should we have asked?**

Why do The NSMC believe so deeply in self-interest as the key to voluntary behaviour change?

Because I am an old-fashion populist who believes that people deserve what they want. I have great faith in the ability of people to know what they need and in their right to have fun, choose the best course of action and enjoy the praise of their family and friends. Sounds a little like making social change fun, easy and popular for them.

**Where can people find out more about your work?**

Social Marketing Quarterly is a good place to look, and the AED website.
How did you become involved in social marketing?
During my previous career in commercial marketing, I liked the hammer called ‘marketing’ but I was unhappy promoting healthy hair. Once I discovered social marketing, I felt both passionate and satisfied. I guess it was this desire to use my passion, marketing, to do something good that led me to social marketing.

What is social marketing?
Social marketing is a behaviour-transforming framework with which a manager offers benefits that supersede barriers. Managers address primarily those benefits and barriers that their audience really cares for. While this may sound too rational and boring, the execution of this exchange offer is infused with positive and high emotionality.

What one thing have you learnt that you wish you knew 20 years ago?
I consider the marketing mix as a bouquet of flowers. As a student, I received only a couple of flowers (promotion mix) rather than learning the entire bouquet. Ideally, I should have been initiated with the importance of the ‘comprehensive exchange’ in social marketing, followed by exposure to the individual concepts of product, price, and distribution management.

What example of social marketing would you choose to highlight its potential?
The microcredit lending service offered by Muhammad Yunus’s Grameen Bank (GB). Although Dr. Yunus does not call himself a social marketer, his work utilises many of the tools that social marketers employ.

GB offers credit to the rural poor, primarily women, without collateral, thereby reducing barriers. Borrowers use these loans to finance enterprises, education, housing, and so on. This service is available in every village and town of Bangladesh. GB emphasises the promotion of this microcredit service over communication on financial independence. Private money lenders exploit the rural poor with high interest and commercial banks refuse to offer any credit.
On the other hand, GB makes them bankable, financially independent and self-confident.

This movement is innovative, home-grown and community-backed. GB works. It has experienced high recovery rates and delivered a positive impact on development indicators and psychological health. This is business at work, not ‘free’ financial aid.

What advice would you give to someone developing a social marketing initiative?
Total commitment to audience orientation. This would force managers to carry out research at every stage and produce strategies that remain consistent with what the audience desires or what moves them.

Why should limited resources go to social marketing programmes, rather than to reducing a budget deficit or to other tools?
Previously, when times were good, our argument was centred on adding social marketing to the arsenal of social change tools. We claimed that previous efforts had educated, and scared, large sections of society on negative health consequences and legal penalties. These efforts influenced few, and the majority remained indifferent. We felt there was an extra room in the house of ‘funds available for social change’, and social marketing deserved that space.

In the current climate, we should replace the education-only approach with social marketing. The house has shrunk a bit, the extra room is lost, but social problems have not disappeared, and individuals’ motivations and abilities have not improved. Social marketing is committed to delivering behaviour change results, and it is comprehensive, multi-faceted and flexible.

First, in the initial phase of implementation, the social marketing framework attempts to create awareness and change attitudes in the same manner as education, but later it goes further. Second, it employs marketing principles to convince an upstream audience as well. Third, the framework is flexible enough to work with both community and media. Most importantly, this flexibility allows social marketers to implement campaigns within a reasonable budget. These are dollars/pounds/euros/rupees well spent!

“I liked the hammer called ‘marketing’ but I was unhappy promoting healthy hair”
Prof. Michael Rothschild

Emeritus Professor, University of Wisconsin, USA
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How did you become involved in social marketing?
Back in the early 1970s, I was working in commercial advertising and thought there should be better things to do with marketing than merely selling another pair of shoes or another bottle of beer. When I got to Stanford for my PhD, I discovered social marketing and began to work with Chuck Weinberg, who was developing one of the first social marketing courses.

What is social marketing?
It’s the use of commercial marketing techniques to manage behaviour with respect to non-business issues, such as public health. It’s also the application of the theories of behavioural economics.

How can we build capacity in social marketing?
We need to do more training. This can be through university courses, and workshops for those who are beyond university. We also need to show commercial practitioners that they can have a richer life by working with us. We need to show them they can ‘do well by doing good’.

What advice would you give to someone trying to make a business case for developing a social marketing strategy?
It is generally much cheaper to prevent a bad outcome than it is to fix one. For example, in Road Crew, we have data showing that it is more than 30 times as costly to clean up after an impaired driving crash than it is to implement a crash prevention programme. We can document that we help avoid crashes and save lives. If we carefully collect data, we should be able to show the costs and benefits of our programmes. To do this, we need to define our targets and our behaviour goals specifically, and then measure outcomes against those goals.

What are the challenges faced by an organisation with limited funds to invest in a social marketing intervention?
The challenge is to find funds. We must find partners with self-interested goals that overlap with ours. We need to convince them that the best use of their discretionary funds is to become our partners. To do this, the challenge is to convince them that we are a better choice than any other option competing for these resources. This requires us to market to prospective partners in the same way that we market to our target audiences.

What are the key ethical issues in trying to influence people’s behaviour?
The key issue is that we have an ethical obligation to try to change behaviours that impose large costs on others, but we have no right to change behaviours that do not harm others. To me, it is therefore ethical to reduce obesity, which leads to increased costs for the healthcare system and taxpayers. I also try to be utilitarian in my evaluations, so that I look for the strategy that provides the greatest good for the greatest number of people. In this way, Road Crew can accept allowing a few people to drink more, if the roadways become safer because we are giving them rides.
What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?

‘Nudge’, by Thaler and Sunstein, is an easy but important book about behavioural economics that can profoundly inform our views of social marketing.

If you were trapped in a lift for ten minutes with the US President, what would you ask him?

We are fortunate to now have a US President with a senior staff who understand and practice behavioural economics. I would first describe social marketing as applied behavioural economics, and then ask how we as practitioners of social marketing can help him further his agenda.

“It is generally much cheaper to prevent a bad outcome than it is to fix one.”
What is social marketing?
It is about using the best of commercial marketing to tackle social issues such as health and the environment. It is about recognising that sometimes education or even law are insufficient alone to change behaviour. It is about discovering how to offer something that would be more appealing to the target audience than their current behaviour.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Stand in the ‘shoes’ of your target audience, to really understand the costs and benefits of alternative behaviours as they see them. Something that may seem logical and rational from your perspective may be perceived very differently by your target audience. Do not assume anything!

How we can build capacity in social marketing?
We must create more awareness in business schools of this untapped demand for social marketing education and training. In the UK, some universities are struggling for student recruitment on traditional courses like the MBA. There is expertise in many of the essential skills that need to be taught in social marketing which could be used to build capacity. We should organise work placements for social marketing or business students to gain practical experience, and facilitate ‘sabbaticals’ for those in commercial marketing or academia who would like to lend their skills to real-life social marketing interventions.
Social marketing increasingly encompasses people from both marketing and the social sciences. What are the challenges in bringing together the expertise? A common perception of non-marketers is that marketing is often manipulative and primarily involves just ‘promotion’, such as advertising. Similarly, there is a misperception by some marketers that those in other disciplines do not involve the target audience or conduct research, but simply ‘tell’ the target audience how they should behave. Forums that bring together those in marketing and those from other relevant disciplines to discuss ideas and develop holistic solutions would be invaluable.

How can we better engage high level decision-makers in understanding the benefits of social marketing? Use examples to illustrate the power of social marketing. We need to celebrate, highlight and disseminate best practise at every occasion. ShowCase, The NSMC’s case example database, is a fantastic resource to demonstrate not only the process of social marketing interventions, but also the outcomes that can be achieved by using a social marketing-informed approach.

What is the best way to coordinate effective partnerships between the public and private sector? The private sector often has the skills and resources that we need to be successful, but we need to use an ‘upstream’ social marketing approach and uncover their perceived barriers and benefits for entering into a partnership. Do not be over-suspicious of commercial companies’ motives – many do want to ‘do good’, although some of course just want the PR!

What are the most challenging aspects of creating a social marketing intervention? I am currently involved in developing a social marketing intervention to reduce the incidence of deliberate grass fires in the Welsh Valleys. One of the most challenging aspects is the project management – getting all parties involved to keep to timescales and meet deadlines.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing? Gerard Hastings, ‘Why should the devil have all the best tunes?’. It is insightful and very readable, with lots of examples.
How did you become involved in social marketing?
Social marketing, like public health, is a discovery profession. Many people, like me, start on different paths, only to discover the power and promise of social marketing. After serving as a peer health educator at Rutgers University, I was hired to work in student health. During this time, I developed a print media campaign about preventing acquaintance rape, before I had ever heard of health communication or social marketing. I then went back to school to complete Master’s and doctoral degrees, but these early experiences coalesced my interests around social marketing and health communication, including teaching, research, practice – and links into government.

What is social marketing?
Put simply, social marketing is the application of the sciences and strategies of commercial marketing in order to help people and communities. ‘Marketing for the Greater Good’ is my bumper sticker version. I would also stress the need to focus on the principles of being customer-centred, working for both individual and community level impact, and focusing on behaviour change.

How can we promote social marketing to practitioners and decision-makers?
Social marketing is still very much hidden, even in the health field. Awareness and understanding among health professionals and other stakeholders can be very low. People often dismiss it because they don’t really understand it.

We need to do a better job of communicating what social marketing is, and what it can and can’t do. We have to deliver and demonstrate results every time we get a chance. And we have to be persistent and patient in these efforts.

What are the challenges faced by an organisation with significant funds to invest in a social marketing intervention?
Unrealistic expectations: the sense that if you have more money, you should have a correspondingly greater impact. Commercial marketers spend billions to move the needle a few percentage points, to achieve a very small change in market share, but they still see this as an enormous success. Social marketers spend far less, but are expected to deliver much more. The other key challenge is to institutionalise work. Just because you have money at the outset, it doesn’t mean it will always be there. It is important from day one to work towards mainstreaming and institutionalising the work.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
Fortunately, there are many excellent books from which to choose so I’ll leave it up the reader to make a selection. I prefer the scientific journals, such as Social Marketing Quarterly and the Journal of Health Communication, as valuable resources for the latest in research and practice findings.

What one thing have you learnt that you wish you knew 20 years ago?
Interpersonal relationships and employee development are the most important characteristics for a successful organisation.

Where can people find out more about your work?
You can search for my academic writings through PubMed or Google Scholar by searching for ‘J.M. Bernhardt’, or go to www.jaybernhardt.com.
How did you become involved in social marketing?
I wrote a book in the early 90s, ‘Fostering Sustainable Behavior’, that merged knowledge from social marketing with knowledge from psychology.

What is social marketing?
From my perspective, social marketing involves five steps: selecting behaviours; uncovering the barriers and benefits to the selected behaviours; developing strategies that address these barriers and benefits; piloting the strategy; and then, when the strategy is found to be cost-effective, implementing it broadly. This process can be utilised to foster a wide range of behaviours.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Carefully select which behaviour(s) to target and conduct formative research regarding the barriers and benefits to these behaviours. If these first two steps of community-based social marketing are skipped, programmes have a low likelihood of success.

How can we build capacity in social marketing?
Demand that governmental behavioural change programmes use social marketing approaches.

What needs to be done to build the workforce in social marketing?
Encourage governmental and nongovernmental agencies to hire social marketing staff, and promote those who develop their social marketing skill base.

What are the key ethical issues in trying to influence people’s behaviour?
Knowledge on the part of the recipient that they their behaviour is being shaped.

What should we be doing to support the development of a robust shared evidence base?
Please see my website for an example of an attempt to do this with respect to environmental behavioural change. The new site combines five resources (our book; over 1,000 articles related to environmental behavioural change; case studies; discussion forums, which include a daily digest that reaches over 6,000 practitioners; and an online journal, ‘Journal of Fostering Sustainable Behavior’). We need a similar effort on the broad set of behaviours addressed by social marketing.

What are the challenges faced by an organisation with limited funds to invest in a social marketing intervention?
The challenge of doing formative research with a small budget. We need to see state and federal efforts to provide barrier and benefit research to those who are unable to do this work themselves.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
Kotler and Lee’s recent edition of ‘Social Marketing’.

What other question should we have asked you?
It is useful to consider the level of penetration that social marketing has reached within different domains. While social marketing is fairly broadly used – for example, to foster health-related behavioural changes – it is rarely used to foster environment-related behavioural changes.
What got you involved in social marketing?
In my first role in the Public Health Directorate in England’s Department of Health, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer asked me to investigate whether social marketing would be an effective tool in helping people to make healthy lifestyle choices. I rapidly came to the conclusion that it could, and we should be involved in developing and sponsoring the development of social marketing throughout all parts of the public sector.

What is social marketing?
There are many definitions of what social marketing is. The NSMC’s formal definition is that it is the application of marketing, alongside other concepts and techniques, to achieve specific behavioural goals for a social good. For me, at its core, social marketing is all about listening and understanding the people you want to help, and then working with them to build programmes that reflect the realities of their lives.

Why should limited resources go to social marketing programmes, rather than to reducing a budget deficit or to other tools?
If social marketing tools and processes are used widely and effectively in the public sector, we will be able to target public resources where they are needed most. For example, The NSMC estimates that preventable illness, caused by things like alcohol misuse and smoking, cost the English taxpayer £187 billion in 2005 – that’s approximately 19 per cent of GDP. The figure speaks for itself.

How can we build capacity in social marketing?
By ensuring that all levels in public service understand the benefits that social marketing can bring to their work area. The NSMC has worked hard over the last three years to train and develop people in the health sector. However, we now need to look past health and into other sectors such as finance, environment, transport and social issues.

How can social marketing enhance government policy and strategy?
There are still too many government delivery programmes that are developed in isolation from the communities they are trying to help. Social marketing provides a methodology that ensures that people are involved in the development of programmes throughout the whole planning and implementation process. This works at all levels, from local to national.

How can we promote social marketing to practitioners and decision-makers?
We need to ensure that social marketing projects that are currently being developed are implemented effectively and achieve the desired results. The best form of promotion is to prove that social marketing works!

Where will social marketing be in 20 year’s time?
Hopefully, the majority of our work at the NSMC will be done, and social marketing tools and processes will be embedded in the development and delivery of all government public-facing programmes. It would also be great to see a large and successful trade association, made up of clients and companies delivering social marketing projects to all sectors.

1. Source: ‘It’s our health!’, NSMC, 2006
Dr Stephen Dann

Senior Lecturer, Australian National University, Australia
www.stephendann.com www.stephendann.net

How did you become involved in social marketing?
I inherited the teaching duties for social marketing at Griffith University after the subject’s founder, Dr Susan Dann, moved to a new school. Since then, I’ve been actively engaged in the teaching and research community on the SOC-MKTG social marketing listserv, and applying our principles into practice with DrinkWise Australia.

What is social marketing?
The adaptation and adoption of commercial marketing for social change. (For the more complex definition, see my paper ‘Redefining social marketing with contemporary commercial marketing definitions’ in the Journal of Business Research).

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Don’t cheat. If the market won’t adopt voluntarily, ask why; assess the product’s benefits and value; and keep working on developing a viable alternative. Don’t automatically fall back on legislation and force if the market rejects the offer. That’s cheating, that’s disrespecting the market.

Social marketing increasingly encompasses people from both marketing and the social sciences. What are the challenges in bringing together the expertise?
Convincing the outsiders to shut up about ‘dropping the “m” word’. We’re one form of change, one that uses marketing. If there’s no marketing, it’s not social marketing, and it’s not what we do.

What are the challenges faced by an organisation with limited funds to invest in a social marketing intervention?
Thinking that budget equates to success. A world of good can be done with time, effort and understanding, by one individual talking to another and getting genuine understanding between them. If you have an online target market, the cost of going online is internet access costs, plus time.

Blogger and Wordpress, Twitter, Livejournal, Vox, Facebook and Myspace are free hosts where the time you spend is worth more than the dollar value of any purchase. If you have an offline target market, go out to it in person. Use ethnographic research to learn about the needs and wants, then co-create a product-solution with the people who are most going to need it. Use local resources and tie into what local groups have at their disposal, or could conceivably use themselves.

What are the key ethical issues in trying to influence people’s behaviour?
Every part of it. Social marketers are inherently prone to utilitarian ethics, based on the idea of social marketing being about improving the welfare of society and the target individual. No social marketing campaign sets out to do evil, yet evil can easily be done in the name of improving society.

What one thing have you learnt that you wish you knew 20 years ago?
How effective a simple ‘hold the line’ strategy can be for building the self-confidence of the marketing discipline to stand up, claim and reclaim the name of marketing from the people who are misusing, misapply or mismanaging it.
How did you become involved in social marketing?
I was hired to bring a marketing approach to the federal health department in the early 1980s. I had the opportunity to read articles from Jack Porter, Bill Novelli and later Phil Kotler, and was convinced that the social marketing approach was just what the doctor ordered. At the time, no-one in Canada was involved in social marketing in any major way, so my information came from the USA.

I started up a social marketing division at Health and Welfare Canada 28 years ago, and after running hundreds of campaigns, the organisation still exists today. It is a legacy of which I am very proud. Before leaving the government, I developed a social marketing e-learning tool based on our many years of experience. I have recently developed a social marketing workbook which is available on our website.

What is social marketing?
Social marketing uses marketing principles and techniques to influence a target group to change their behaviour to improve health, prevent injuries, protect the environment and so on. Social marketing is not only used to change behaviours for the benefit of individuals, but for groups and, more importantly, society as a whole.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Do your homework. Too often, social marketing interventions are developed with insufficient primary and secondary research. This is a big mistake. We still see campaigns developed with poor research and intelligence, and when they don’t have much impact, an organisation’s management blames the social marketing, rather than the fact that the campaign was poorly conceived.
What needs to be done to build the workforce in social marketing?

We need to start with universities and encourage students, especially in marketing, to get involved in social marketing. We need to convince senior management, and in the case of government, political masters of the merits of the social marketing approach. Many still think it is ‘fluff’. Finally, we need to retrain many existing social marketers who are running social communications or public relations campaigns and think they are running social marketing programmes.

What one thing have you learnt that you wish you knew 20 years ago?

There is tendency by managers to hire people with similar backgrounds to themselves. If I could do it all over again, I would probably hire people with very different backgrounds than mine, as they bring a tremendous ‘added value’ to your organisation. I did learn this eventually, but wish I had started earlier.

What are the most challenging aspects of creating a social marketing intervention?

- The biggest challenge is to secure sufficient funds to create and implement the intervention.
- The promotional tactical options are very complex these days, with 300 television channels and over 1,000 radio stations in Canada. Also, social, digital media, and online marketing tactical options, are very difficult to master.
- Reaching hard-to-reach groups, such as aboriginal people, people who live in isolated communities, and of course low socio-economic status people.
- Working with communications suppliers (especially advertising agencies) who tend to recommend high cost tactics such as advertising, when there are much more cost-effective and efficient options for running targeted campaigns, such as digital and face-to-face marketing, strategic alliances with other sectors, database marketing, public relations and publicity, and so on.

What other question should we have asked?

If you look into the future, what do you believe will be the state of social marketing 20 years from now?
How did you become involved in social marketing?
In the early 1970s, I realised that marketing concepts and tools could be applied to areas beyond goods and services. Marketing could be applied to market any organisation, person, place, cause or idea. My colleague Gerald Zaltman and I wrote an article called ‘social marketing’. We chose the name to show that not all marketing is commercial. Marketers could address public concerns and contribute to their resolution. Subsequently, I published the first book on social marketing with Ned Roberto. Some years later, Nancy Lee, Ned Roberto and I published a much-updated version, with new theory and case examples. The book is now in its third edition.

What is social marketing?
Social marketing is the application of marketing concepts and tools to influence the behaviour change of a target audience in ways that create net benefits for the individual, community, and society at large. Typically, social marketing centres on such problem areas as health, environmental protection, better education, family planning and others.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Frame the problem carefully and be realistic in the results that you are seeking. Conduct the intervention with clear performance measurements so that cause and effect can be easily identified, and the impact can be measured in financial terms and/or other metrics.

What needs to be done to build the workforce in social marketing?
We need to educate business and non-profit managers and politicians in the meaning of social marketing and the major steps and processes it uses. We must avoid confusing it with social advertising or corporate social responsibility. We have formulated a distinct set of ten steps which has received high agreement on how to develop a social marketing plan. If we can educate social marketing users in social marketing methodology, the interventions are likely to be successful.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
In addition to our third edition of Social Marketing (Sage, 2008), I would recommend Alan Andreasen’s book, ‘Social Marketing in the 21st Century’.

If you were trapped in a lift for ten minutes with the US President, what would you ask him?
We are at a stage in time, Mr President, where we are beginning to have a methodology which is cost-effective and could help us resolve many of the social problems that have plagued society. That tool is social marketing.
How did you become involved in social marketing?
Through my work in public health – I was looking for a pragmatic and non-traditional framework to encompass the many facets of issues with rigour, creativity and ethics.

What is social marketing?
Social marketing is about encouraging people to adopt behaviours for their personal benefit and for that of society in general. You will have a much better chance of influencing people to voluntarily adopt a behaviour if you:
- Know more about them
- Understand that not all are likely to be at the same starting point
- Consider your competition
- Actually make it attractive and easy for people
- Partner with influential people
- Communicate effectively
- Are in it for the long run.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Invest in formative research and audience analysis to see what people are thinking and doing.

How can we build capacity in social marketing?
Through training and ongoing coaching for those interested in it. Also, by providing regular summaries of insights on a variety of audiences and subjects, and highlighting possible implications for strategies.

What are the key ethical issues in trying to influence people’s behaviour?
The legitimacy of the social change agent and agenda; how the ends being pursued and priority audiences have been selected; raising anxiety unnecessarily with messages that use ‘scare tactics’; what is ‘not’ said; the use of resources; and unintended consequences.

What should we be doing to support the development of a robust shared evidence base?
Evaluate initiatives that have used social marketing as a framework (for a variety of issues in a variety of settings) and publish them in the most credible journals.

What are the challenges faced by an organisation with limited funds to invest in a social marketing intervention?
If an organisation sees social marketing as an isolated budget item or intervention, it faces a significant challenge! If it sees social marketing as a framework for planned change, it will see its whole budget as a social marketing budget.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
Prof. Alan Andreasen

McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University, USA
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How did you become involved in social marketing?
It was some years ago, and it was the opportunity to get involved with the Futures Group and Porter Novelli. Both faced social marketing challenges. With the Futures Group it was family planning in the developing world, and with Porter Novelli it was the high blood pressure challenge in the US.

What is social marketing?
My short answer would be the application of marketing concepts, many of them drawn from the private sector, that can be helpful in developing programmes to influence target audiences to adopt socially desirable behaviours.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
My advice would be to make sure that you are trying to influence a very precise behaviour or set of behaviours, and know exactly who your target audience is and what they think about the behaviour. Why? Because a lot of campaigns tend to try to tackle too much, or worry about attitude change or influence. They create what are really education programmes, rather than focusing on things that actually influence behaviour.

How can we build capacity in social marketing?
I think that the more we can develop, and be seen to have developed, good off-the-shelf tools, checklists, examples, frameworks and so on, that people can easily use, the more success we will have. Also, providing methods for social marketers to communicate with each other, through blogs, listserv and other media, can be very helpful in advancing the field.

What needs to be done to build the workforce in social marketing?
I am frustrated by the dearth of academic training in social marketing. At the very least, I would like to see more courses or interesting programmes in schools of public health; in programmes involving the environment; and in business schools, in order to develop a future workforce.

What are the challenges faced by an organisation with limited funds to invest in a social marketing intervention?
Try to find allies to work with so you can develop some level of scale. Another solution is to be as narrow as possible in your behaviour objectives and in your selected target market.

You have to recognise that you can’t go after everyone. The more ‘micro’ you can be in your objectives and target audience, the more likely the budget will be well spent.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
There’s a very good one by Rob Donovan and Henley based on their work in Australia. The book by Kotler and Lee gives lots of examples and is valuable for that. Gerard Hastings’ book is very recent and especially good at giving examples from a European perspective.

What other question should we have asked?
One question I don’t know the answer to is how consistent we all need to be in using the same basic approach right now; we don’t have the same frameworks. If a client was to hire me or someone from The NSMC, we would come at it in different ways. This may lead to confusion.
“Be as narrow as possible in your behaviour objectives and in your selected target market. You have to recognise that you can’t go after everyone.”
How did you become involved in social marketing?
I realised that the health education materials I was creating did not lead to the behaviour change that my organisation desired. Even after people were ‘educated’, they still faced barriers to acting on their knowledge. Social marketing gave me a way to address these barriers and offer people something that they valued.

What is social marketing?
Social marketing is about reducing the barriers people experience to changing their behaviour, and making the behaviour ‘fun, easy and popular’.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Forget communication: think barriers to and benefits of behaviour, and address them.

How can we build capacity in social marketing?
First, we need to talk about it—everywhere! Then, see whose eyes light up, and provide or link these people with opportunities to learn how to do social marketing. If people cannot do all of the process, encourage them to start where they are, and do what they can. Encourage them to develop a marketing mindset.

Social marketing increasingly encompasses people from both a marketing background and the social sciences. What are the challenges in bringing together the expertise?
- An appreciation from those with a marketing background that those in health and human service have much smaller budgets with which to effect behaviour change
- Making sure that those with a marketing background know that marketing is more than just promotion!

What are the key ethical issues in trying to influence people’s behaviour?
Ensuring that one honours their dignity and right to self-determination. Balancing the right of people to make ‘bad’ choices (in our eyes), with the interests of the state to mitigate the impact these choices have on the larger whole.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
Kotler and Lee’s ‘Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviours for Good’.

What other question should we have asked?
How do we best fight the growing onslaught of mis-definition and misunderstanding of what social marketing really is?
How did you become involved in social marketing?
I first got into social marketing in 1988 after a long career in both the private and public sectors. I was working in the health sector at the time with a management role in public health, which also was responsible for corporate communications and public involvement. When I discovered there was something called social marketing I had a ‘eureka’ moment: this is what I’d been looking for!

What is social marketing?
For me, social marketing is about being led around by the nose by the people you are seeking to serve. It’s about applying best practice evidence for what we know works in helping people to change. It’s a systematic process that rigorously builds evidence and data-driven solutions that people will buy into. I would also want to say something about what social marketing is not, as there are many misconceptions. Social marketing is not about developing smart communications programmes. It’s about developing services and products that people want, and making the benefits of socially responsible behaviours outweigh the costs of not changing.

What should we be doing to develop a robust shared evidence base?
We all have a responsibility to record and learn from what we are doing. In social marketing this is key, so that we can reflect on what has worked and what hasn’t, and build better interventions.

Everyone has a responsibility to share as widely as possible what they have learned, especially when things do not go as planned.

What are the key ethical issues in trying to influence people’s behaviour?
It seems to me that the key issue is who defines what a particular socially positive behaviour or outcome is. If you are lucky, as we are, to live in a democracy, people vote for administrations that set out policies that have political support. So I think a collective decision about what issues need to be addressed and how they should be addressed, is probably the best way of ensuring that people are not manipulated or forced into behaviours that, as a collective, we would oppose.

This does mean that some people will have certain freedoms curtailed, or may be penalised if they behave in certain ways. For example, smokers’ rights to smoke may be restricted in certain places. Personally, I include interventions such as legal restrictions and financial incentives as part of social marketing. They can be used to great effect to encourage or discourage behaviour, and providing there is popular support for these measures, arrived at through democratic means and good evidence, such restrictions or incentives should be used.

What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?
I would recommend Max DePree’s ‘Leadership is an art’. It’s not about social marketing, but it is a great little book that I first read many years ago, that convinced me that if you want to help people you need to first understand them and then serve them.
Craig Lefebvre, PhD

Research Professor in preventive and community health at GWU School of Public Health and Health Services and chief maven, socialShifting, Social Marketing Services, Inc., USA
socialmarketing.blogs.com

How did you become involved in social marketing?
I came into this area with a PhD in clinical psychology and post-doctoral work in behavioural medicine. My first position was with the Pawtucket Heart Health Programme, a National Institutes of Health-funded heart disease prevention programme in Rhode Island, that brought together the worlds of public health and behavioural health. This very quickly led to me exploring the world of marketing for population behavioural change. From there, it was tripping over the early social marketing writing, and thinking that it sounded similar to what I was trying to do.

I started talking about social marketing with June Flora at Stanford University, who was already using social marketing principles in the Five-City Project. We worked together, doing some thinking and experimenting with different ways of using marketing principles in community-based heart disease prevention programmes.

What is social marketing?
Using the techniques of marketing to improve people’s health and social conditions. And by that I would also say that the everyday examples of marketing (such as product innovations; pricing and distribution strategies; and advertising and promotions) that help and encourage people to buy various products and services, are the same types of techniques we can use to encourage people to adopt healthy and environmentally-friendly behaviours.

What advice would you give to someone developing their first social marketing intervention?
Listen to the audience. Don’t assume you know what is best for solving or addressing a problem – listen to and talk with a lot of people.

How can we promote social marketing to practitioners and decision-makers?
This is not so much an empirical or evidence-based question of highlighting to them what studies have shown social marketing to be effective at doing, although that is important. For practitioners and decision makers, it’s about being able to tell stories about how social marketing was adopted in a programme in significant and very basic ways and the improvements in reach, service and benefits that resulted. It’s that kind of narrative of before and after, helping people see and understand how social marketing approaches apply to and change practice and policy development.

What needs to be done to build the workforce in social marketing?
It’s open to everybody. Right now, a short history of social marketing would show it has lived and thrived with the links to public health – and there is much that needs to be done to bring it into public health as a discipline, not just a practice. One of the frustrations I have is that it doesn’t earn much value in academia. We need to give it more value as an academic discipline in both marketing and public health. I want to see incentives to encourage more people to enter and pursue an academic career in social marketing within the public health and marketing fields.
What book would you recommend to people to help them understand social marketing?

Text books are all probably equally as good – they all have their own strengths. I like ‘Truth, Lies and Advertising’ by Jon Steele. It is good at developing the audience insight and translating that into practice, which I think is the essence of good social marketing. If you don’t understand the core value of listening, use what you learn to generate the insight and then translate this into practice, the other marketing skills will do you very little good. This is missing from most work I review.

“Listen to the audience. Don’t assume you know what is best for solving or addressing a problem – listen to and talk with a lot of people.”
Resource centre

Books and reports


Max DePree, ‘Leadership is an art’, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1990


Gerard Hastings, ‘Social Marketing: Why should the Devil have all the best tunes?’, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007

Centre for Excellence in Public Sector Marketing, ‘Social Marketing Workbook’, CEPSM, 2007 (available at www.publicsectormarketing.ca/rs/rs_workbook_sm_e.html)


National Social Marketing Centre, ‘It’s our health!’, The NSMC, 2006


David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, ‘Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector’, Addison-Wesley, 1992


Articles


Mike Newton-Ward, ‘Building social marketing capacity at the state level: North Carolina’s Social Marketing Matrix Team’, Eta Sigma Gamma Health Education Monograph Series 2004 on Social Marketing, 21, 1, 2004


Resources


ShowCase, The NSMC’s social marketing case example database, www.thensmc.com/showcase-case-studies.htm


Social Marketing ListServ, run by Alan Andreasen at Georgetown (send an email to listproc@listproc.georgetown.edu with a message saying ‘subscribe soc-mktg your name’ with your own name in place of ‘your name’)

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