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**Promoting a
Sustainable Future:
*An Introduction
to Community-Based
Social Marketing***

**Doug McKenzie-Mohr, Ph.D.
St. Thomas University**

National Round Table
on the Environment
and the Economy



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et l'économie

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Doug McKenzie-Mohr, Ph.D.

St. Thomas University

Dedication

For Taryn and Jaime

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Foreword

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) was created in 1988 as Canada's principal institutional response to the challenge of sustainable development. As an independent agency of the federal government, the NRTEE seeks to provide objective views and information regarding the state of the debate on the relationship between the environment and the economy.

At the heart of the NRTEE's work is a commitment to improve the quality of economic and environmental policy development. By providing decision makers and opinion-leaders with the necessary information to make reasoned choices, the NRTEE is contributing to a more sustainable future for Canada. It was with this in mind that the Education Task Force of the NRTEE began a program to introduce community-based social marketing to individuals in municipalities and regions across Canada who are actively involved in designing environmental and economic programs.

Community-based social marketing is an important tool for designing effective programs that can move society towards sustainability. Community-based social marketing recognizes that the inherent challenges in altering behaviour or changing attitudes are not easily overcome. This workbook provides a series of precedents and workable examples to meet the specific needs and requirements of municipalities and regions trying to increase awareness and modify behaviour at the community level.

The NRTEE and Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy (MOEE), through their support of this workbook, recognize the vital role that communication plays in the move towards a sustainable Canada. The challenge of sustainable development has catalyzed many innovative partnerships across Canada among a variety of organizations. As one such example, this workbook was produced through the efforts of the NRTEE, the MOEE, the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators and Doug McKenzie-Mohr. Together we believe we have produced a useful guide which will serve as a practical tool for decision makers seeking to implement successful sustainable development programs.

NRTEE Education Task Force

Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy (MOEE) are pleased to present this workbook as a further contribution to the greater understanding of the concept of sustainable development and its practical applications. The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the NRTEE, its members, or the MOEE.

Preface

Humanity is at a crossroads. By the end of the next century, global population is expected to reach 11.3 billion.¹ As we move toward a world with twice today's inhabitants we will be forced to alter our lifestyles dramatically so that our burgeoning population does not outstrip the earth's ability to support humanity and other species. Societies of the future, particularly those in the North, will need to consume far fewer resources and use those resources much more efficiently. Failing to do so will result in what Robert Olson has described as an ecological holocaust.²

The movement toward a sustainable future has begun in many places throughout the world. In North America, numerous initiatives to reduce waste, increase energy efficiency and reduce water consumption are first footholds in the transition to sustainability. This workbook was written for the people who design these programs. Its purpose is simple: to provide information that can enhance the success of their efforts. It contains information regarding a set of "tools" for effectively encouraging environmentally friendly behaviour. Each of these tools in and of its own right is capable of having a substantial impact upon the adoption of more sustainable behaviour. Collectively, they provide a powerful set of instruments with which to encourage and maintain behaviour change. In addition to providing this set of tools, this book details how to identify barriers to sustainable behaviour, and design and evaluate programs to overcome them. The strategies detailed in this book, and the methods suggested in order to implement and evaluate them, form the basis of an emerging field that I refer to as "community-based social marketing."

Community-based social marketing draws heavily on research in social psychology that indicates that initiatives to promote behaviour change are most effective when they are carried out at the *community level* and involve *direct contact* with people. The emergence of community-based social marketing over the last several years can be traced to a growing understanding that social marketing, which relies heavily or exclusively on media advertising, can be effective in creating public awareness and understanding of issues related to sustainability, but is limited in its ability to bring about behaviour change.^{3,4,5,6}

How effective is community-based social marketing in promoting sustainable behaviour? In a word, very. For example, compared with the national average, home energy auditors who were trained to use community-based social marketing techniques for the largest utility in the United States, Pacific Gas and Electric, persuaded three to four times as many households to weatherize their dwelling.⁷ Similarly, when techniques discussed in this book have been used to promote recycling, recycling rates have risen dramatically.⁸

This book will provide you with the information you need to incorporate community-based social marketing techniques into the programs you design. After reading this book you will have a new set of tools at your disposal that you can use to create effective community programs to foster sustainable behaviour. The first chapter introduces community-based social marketing and the importance of dealing with the "human dimensions of sustainability." Chapters 2 through 5 present a variety of tools for overcoming barriers to sustainable behaviour. Chapter 2 demonstrates approaches to increase commitment to engage in sustainable activity. Chapter 3 details the importance of using prompts to remind people to engage in sustainable behaviour. Chapter 4 introduces the impact that norms have upon our behaviour and suggests how norms can be used in the promotion of sustainable activities. Chapter 5 reviews various aspects of *effective communication*. Chapter 6 discusses the importance of making sustainable behaviour convenient, while Chapters 7 and 8 describe ways to uncover the barriers to sustainable behaviour and design and evaluate programs to overcome these barriers. Finally, Chapter 9 reviews how to increase support for the use of community-based social marketing strategies within your organization.

I would like to acknowledge the people who have assisted me in writing this book. I am grateful to the people who attended workshops I have given on community-based social marketing and sustainability. Your encouragement to write this book, and the suggestions that you made regarding its content, have been very helpful. A number of people read prior drafts and provided me with invaluable feedback. I am grateful to Ben Bennett, Mike Birett, Walter Corson, Adam Ciulini, Elizabeth Crocker, Carla Doucet, Jim Dyal, Jay Kassirer, Glenn Munroe, Glen Pleasance, Linda Varangu, Deborah Du Nann Winter and Neil Wollman for their helpful comments. I would also like to thank my wife, Sue, and my father-in-law, Don McKenzie, for providing me with editorial help. I am particularly grateful to the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy for making the publication of this book possible. Finally, I would especially like to thank my young children, Taryn and Jaime, who have been more than understanding, as I took time away from them to write this book.

If you would like to provide me with feedback or additional examples of the tools described in this book, I can be reached at: Department of Psychology, St. Thomas University, Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5G3, email McKenzie@StThomasU.ca.

Doug McKenzie-Mohr
December 1995

Chapter 1

Toward a Sustainable Future

That which is not good for the bee-hive cannot be good for the bees.

Marcus Aurelius

I have a confession to make. When I moved to Fredericton two years ago, I bought a composter for our backyard. For nine months of the year my wife and I feed the composter diligently. However, by January there is a snow drift about a metre deep that stretches from my back door to the composter. I start off the month with good intentions, shovelling a pathway or trampling down the snow with a pair of winter boots that reach nearly to my knees. But by late January, when the temperature reaches minus 20°C, I have had enough, and despite my good intentions, the organics end up in the garbage can at the curbside.

My environmental transgressions extend beyond seasonal composting. During the spring, summer and early fall I bike to work. However, in the winter, which in Fredericton stretches from November through to early April, I take the taxi. I know that automobiles are a principal source of the carbon dioxide emissions that lead to global warming, so why don't I walk to work or take the bus? To walk to work takes approximately 40 minutes. While the exercise would be good for me, I would rather spend that time with my family. As for the bus, there is no direct bus route from our house to the university. In fact, I can walk to work more quickly than the time needed to take the bus ride. Finally, the taxi costs only marginally more than bus fare, making it an even easier decision to take the taxi. While I am concerned with the possibility of global warming, my behaviour for six months of the year is inconsistent with my concern.

These two anecdotes illustrate the challenge faced in designing programs to promote sustainable behaviour. All technological "solutions" to environmental problems also have a human component that must be addressed. Mass transit will only reduce carbon dioxide emissions if people elect to leave their cars at home and take the bus or train instead. Composting can significantly reduce the municipal solid waste stream, but only if people elect to com-

post.¹ Programmable thermostats can reduce home heating costs and also carbon dioxide emissions, but only if people install and program them. Water-efficient toilets and low-flow shower heads can significantly reduce residential water use, but once again only if people install them. Finally, many environmental issues have no immediate technological fix, and in these cases people must choose to adopt alternative lifestyles that are sustainable.

To date, too little attention has been paid to the human side of sustainability. If we are to make the transition to a sustainable future, we must concern ourselves with what leads individual people to engage in behaviour that collectively is sustainable.

The Human Side of Sustainability

The folly of not paying adequate attention to the factors that lead individuals to engage in more sustainable behaviour is well illustrated by a unique program developed to promote energy conservation. In 1978, an act passed by the United States Congress brought into being the Residential Conservation Service (RCS). The RCS mandated that major gas and electric utilities in the United States provide homeowners with on-site assessments in order to enhance energy efficiency. In addition, homeowners had access to interest-free or low-cost loans and a listing of local contractors and suppliers.

In total, 5.6% of eligible households requested that an RCS assessor evaluate their home.² Of those who had their home evaluated, 50% took steps to enhance the energy efficiency of their dwelling, compared with 30% for non participants (the nonparticipants were households who were on the waiting list to have their home assessed).³ What types of actions were taken? In general, the actions were inexpensive and did not involve a contractor. Frequent energy efficiency actions included caulking,

weather-stripping, installing clock thermostats, turning down the hot water heater and installing a hot water heater blanket. These actions reduced energy use per household between 2% and 3%.⁴ Given that millions of dollars were spent on the RCS, and that it is possible to reduce residential energy use by more than 50%, an initiative that produces annual savings of 2-3% can only be seen as a failure.

An Economic View of Human Behaviour

Why did such a comprehensive program fail? In large part the RCS failed because it did not pay adequate attention to the human side of promoting more sustainable energy use. Those who designed this massive initiative assumed that homeowners would retrofit their homes if it was clear that it was in their financial best interest to do so. The “rational-economic model” of human behaviour, upon which the RCS was based erroneously assumes that individuals systematically evaluate choices, such as whether or not to install additional insulation to an attic, and then act in accordance with their economic self-interest. This perspective on human behaviour suggests that in order to affect these decisions, an organization, such as a utility, need only inform the public that it is in their financial best interest and consequently the public, being “rational,” will behave accordingly. How effective have social marketing campaigns been that have been based on this model? Not very.⁵ While the “rational-economic model” does consider the “human” side of sustainable behaviour, it does so in a very simplistic way. As a United States National Research Council study concluded, this view of human behaviour overlooks “. . . the rich mixture of cultural practices, social interactions, and human feelings that influence the behaviour of individuals, social groups, and institutions.”⁶

Altering Attitudes to Promote Sustainable Behaviour

One other view of human behaviour has been prominent in attempts to promote sustainable behaviour to date. Psychologists refer to this other perspective as the “attitude-behaviour model,” and it has found its widest application in sustainability education.

In response to issues such as global warming, species extinction and ozone loss a plethora of documentaries, books and pamphlets has been produced and distributed. Behind most of these educational efforts is an implicit as-

sumption that increasing the public’s knowledge of environmental issues, and altering attitudes, will lead to changes in behaviour. In this way environmental education is no different from educational efforts that have been directed at such issues as substance abuse, AIDS or health and fitness.

Is it warranted to believe that by enhancing knowledge and altering attitudes, behaviour will change? Apparently not. While environmental attitudes and knowledge have been found to be related to behaviour, frequently the relationship is weak. Why would attitudes and knowledge not be more strongly related to behaviour? Consider the two anecdotes with which I began this chapter. I have attitudes that are supportive of both composting and alternative transportation. Further, I am relatively knowledgeable on both of these topics. Nonetheless, in both cases another factor, inconvenience brought on by winter, moderated whether my attitudes and knowledge were predictive of my behaviour.

Several studies document that education alone often has little or no effect upon sustainable behaviour. For example, in response to the energy crisis of the 1970s, Scott Geller and his colleagues studied the impact that intensive workshops have upon residential energy conservation.⁷ In these workshops, participants were exposed to three hours of educational material in a variety of formats (slide shows, lectures, etc.).

All of the material had been designed to impress upon participants that it was possible to significantly reduce home energy use. Geller measured the impact of the workshops by testing participants’ attitudes and beliefs prior to and following the workshop. Upon completing the workshop, attendees indicated greater awareness of energy issues, more appreciation for what could be done in their homes to reduce energy use and a willingness to implement the changes that were advocated in the workshop. Despite these changes in awareness and attitudes, behaviour did not change. In follow-up visits to the homes of 40 workshop participants, only 1 had followed through on the recommendation to lower the hot water thermostat. Two participants had put insulating blankets around their hot water heaters, but they had done so prior to attending the workshop. In fact, the only difference between the 40 workshop participants and an equal number of nonparticipants was in the installation of low-flow shower heads. Eight of the 40 participants had installed them, while 2 of the nonparticipants had. However, the installation of the low-flow shower heads was not due to education alone.

Each of the workshop participants had been given a free low-flow shower head to install.

The findings of this study are not unique. A variety of studies document that education efforts alone have little impact upon sustainable behaviour. How then can sustainable behaviour be best promoted?

Community-Based Social Marketing

If any form of sustainable behaviour is to be widely adopted by the public, barriers to engaging in the behaviour must first be removed. Barriers to sustainable behaviour may be internal to the individual such as lack of knowledge, non-supportive attitudes or an absence of commitment.⁸ On the other hand, barriers may reside outside the individual in the form of structural changes that need to be made in order for the behaviour to be more convenient (e.g., providing curbside recycling) or affordable (e.g., subsidizing public transit or compost units).

Practitioners of community-based social marketing recognize that there may be multiple internal and external barriers to widespread public participation in any form of sustainable behaviour. In contrast to the rational-economic and attitude-behaviour models just discussed, community-based social marketing strategies attempt to remove as many of the barriers to a given sustainable behaviour as possible.

Practitioners of community-based social marketing further appreciate that a different constellation of internal and external barriers will exist for different sustainable behaviours (e.g., recycling, composting, alternative transportation). Current research indicates that the barriers that prevent individuals from engaging in one form of sustainable behaviour, such as adding insulation to an attic, may have little in common with the barriers that keep individuals from engaging in other forms of sustainable behaviour, such as recycling.⁹ Further, this research demonstrates that even within a class of sustainable activities, such as waste reduction, very different internal and external barriers emerge as being important.¹⁰ That is, different barriers exist for recycling, composting, or source reduction.

Since the barriers that prevent individuals from engaging in sustainable behaviour are activity specific, community-based social marketers begin the development of a social marketing strategy by conducting research to uncover the barriers to the behaviour they wish to promote. Once these internal and external barriers have been identified, they develop a social marketing strategy to remove these barriers. As you will see throughout this book, the techniques that community-based social marketers use can have a substantial impact upon the adoption of sustainable behaviour.†

Several studies document that education alone often has little or no effect upon sustainable behaviour.

† While this is the first book that the author is aware of on the topic of community-based social marketing, two other books may be of interest to the reader. The following books describe in detail the contributions that psychology can make to the attainment of a sustainable future: Gardner, G.T., & Stern, P.C. (1996). *Environmental problems and human behavior*. Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon; and Winter, D. (1996). *Ecological psychology: Healing the split between planet and self*. New York: Harper Collins.

Chapter 2

Commitment: Turning Good Intentions into Action

Our deeds determine us as much as we determine our deeds.

George Elliot

4 Imagine being approached and asked to have a large, ugly, obtrusive billboard with the lettering “DRIVE CAREFULLY” placed on your front lawn. When a researcher, posing as a volunteer, made precisely this request, numerous residents in a Californian neighborhood flatly declined.¹ That they declined is hardly surprising, especially since they were shown a picture of the billboard almost completely obscuring the view of another house. What is surprising, however, is that fully 76% of another group of residents in this study agreed to have the sign placed on their lawn. Why in one group would over three-fourths agree, while virtually everyone in the other group sensibly declined? The answer lies in something that happened to half of the participants prior to this outlandish request being made. The residents who agreed in droves to have this aberration placed on their lawn were previously asked if they would display in their homes a small, 8 cm sign that said: “BE A SAFE DRIVER.” This request was so innocuous that virtually everyone agreed to it. Agreeing to this trivial request greatly increased the likelihood that they would subsequently consent to having the billboard placed on their lawn.

Are these findings a mere anomaly? Apparently not. In another study a researcher, identifying himself as a member of a consumer group, called and asked householders if he could ask them a few questions about their soap preferences.² A few days later the same researcher called back asking for a much more bigger favour: “Could I send five or six people through your house to obtain an inventory of *all* the products in the house?” The caller carefully explained that this “inventory” would require searching through all of their drawers, closets, etc. Having agreed to the smaller request only a few days earlier, many of the householders apparently felt compelled to agree with this much larger and more invasive request. Indeed, 52.8%

agreed, more than twice as many as among householders who had not received the prior request.

These surprising findings have now been replicated in a variety of settings. In each case, individuals who agreed to a small initial request were far more likely to agree to a subsequent larger request. For example:

- When asked if they would financially support a recreational facility for the handicapped, 92% made a donation if they had previously signed a petition in favour of the facility, compared with 53% for those who had not been asked to sign the petition.³
- Residents of Bloomington, Indiana, were called and asked if they would consider, hypothetically, spending three hours working as a volunteer collecting money for the American Cancer Society. When these individuals were called back three days later by a different experimenter, they were far more likely to volunteer than another group of residents who had not been asked the initial question (31% versus 4%).⁴
- A sample of registered voters was approached one day prior to the 1984 U.S. presidential election and asked: “Do you expect you will vote or not?” All agreed that they would vote. Relative to voters who were not asked this simple question, their likelihood of voting increased by 41%.⁵
- Ending a blood-drive telephone call with the query: “We’ll count on seeing you then, OK?” increased the likelihood of individuals showing up from 62% to 81%.⁶
- Individuals who were asked to wear a lapel pin publicizing a drive by the Canadian Cancer Society were almost twice as likely to subsequently donate than were those who were not asked to wear the pin.⁷

Behaving Consistently

Why does agreeing to a small request lead people to subsequently agree to a much larger one? It seems that when individuals agree to a small request, it alters the way they perceive themselves. That is, when individuals sign a petition favouring the building of a new facility for the handicapped, the act of signing subtly alters their attitudes on the topic. In short, they come to view themselves as the type of person who supports initiatives for the handicapped. When asked later to comply with the larger request, giving a donation, there is strong internal pressure for the individual to behave “consistently.” Similarly, saying that you “think” you would volunteer for the Cancer Society, vote in an election, give blood or wear a lapel pin alters your attitudes and increases the likelihood that you will later act in a consistent way with your new attitudes.

Consistency is an important character trait. Those who behave inconsistently are often perceived as untrustworthy and unreliable. In contrast, individuals whose deeds match their words are viewed as being honest and having integrity.

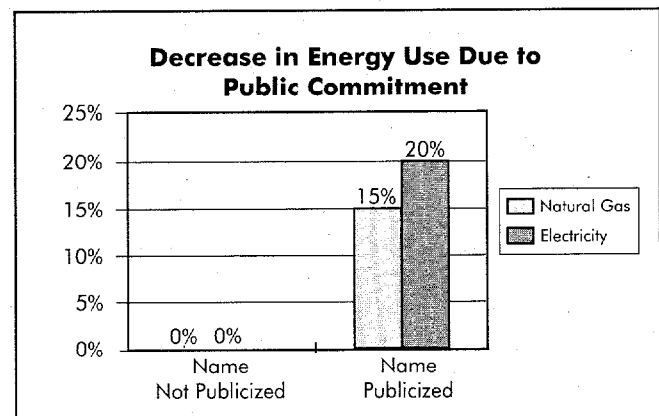
The need in all of us to behave consistently is underscored by a study on a New York City beach. In this study, a researcher posing as a sunbather put a blanket down some 2m from a randomly selected sun worshipper. The researcher then proceeded to relax on the blanket for a few minutes while listening to his radio. He then got up and went for a walk on the beach, leaving the blanket and radio behind. Shortly afterward, another researcher, posing as a thief, stole the radio and fled down the beach. Under these circumstances, the thief was pursued 4 times out of 20 stagings. However, the results were dramatically different when the researcher made a modest request prior to taking the walk. When he asked the person beside him to “watch his things,” in 19 out of the 20 stagings the individual leapt up to pursue the thief. When they caught him some restrained him, others grabbed the radio back, while others demanded an explanation. Almost all acted consistently with what they had said they would do.⁸

The need to behave consistently is further demonstrated by findings that a substantial amount of time can pass between the first and second request, and that the second request can be made by a different individual. That considerable time can pass between the two requests provides further evidence that complying with the initial request alters the way we see ourselves in an enduring way. That we will comply with a second request initiated by a

new person suggests that these changes are not transitory; otherwise we would only feel bound to comply if the request were made by the same person who made the initial request.

Commitment and Sustainable Behaviour

In the area of energy conservation, an interesting application of commitment involved randomly assigning homes that had asked to participate in a home energy assessment



into two groups. One group was asked for permission to publicize their names. While the names were never publicized, simply asking for this permission brought about a 15% reduction in natural gas used and a 20% reduction in electricity used. Importantly, these reductions were still observable 12 months later.⁹ Private commitments have a similar impact. In a unique study, homeowners were mailed either a shower flow restrictor along with a pamphlet on energy conservation or just the pamphlet alone.¹⁰ Homes that received the shower flow restrictor in addition to the pamphlet were not only more likely to install the restrictor, an obvious finding, but were also more likely to engage in the other conservation actions mentioned in the pamphlet (e.g., lowering the temperature on their hot water heaters, installing setback thermostats and cleaning their furnaces). Apparently having installed the shower flow restrictor altered how these individuals perceived themselves. In short, they came to see themselves as the type of person who is concerned about energy conservation and as a result carried through with the other actions suggested in the pamphlet.

Further testimony of the power of gaining a commitment comes from research carried out in cooperation with Pa-

cific Gas and Electric. In this study, home assessors were trained to make use of commitment strategies as well as other community-based social marketing techniques.¹¹ Homeowners were asked to peer into the attic to inspect the insulation level, to place their hand on an uninsulated water heater, etc. After being involved in this way, homeowners were more likely to see themselves as committed to energy conservation. Further, the assessors were trained to secure a verbal commitment from the householder. For example, the householder might be asked: "When do you think that you'll have the weather-stripping completed?... I'll give you a call around then, just to see how it's coming along, and to see if you're having any problems." These subtle changes in how the assessment was presented resulted in substantial increases in the likelihood that householders would retrofit their homes. In fact, using community-based social marketing methods resulted in *three to four* times as many people electing to retrofit their homes.

6 The efficacy of commitment strategies has also been demonstrated with recycling. For example, gaining a written or verbal commitment has been found to increase newspaper recycling.¹² Households in this study were assigned into one of three groups. In the first group homes simply received a pamphlet underscoring the importance of recycling. In contrast, in the second group households made a verbal pledge to recycle newsprint, while in the third group households signed a statement in which they committed themselves to recycle newsprint. Initially, the households that made a verbal commitment or signed a pledge recycled more newsprint than the households that received only a pamphlet. However, an examination of the long-term impact of this manipulation revealed that these effects endured only for the households that committed themselves by signing the statement. This research suggests that verbal commitment may be sufficient to get individuals to initially engage in a new behaviour. However, it may be necessary to seek a stronger commitment through having a pledge signed or having someone's name publicly advertised to obtain long-term changes.

Commitment strategies have been criticized as too labour intensive to warrant implementing on a broad scale.¹³ However, implementing commitment as part of a home visit, as was done in the Pacific Gas and Electric study, is a viable option. Further, asking for a commitment when a

service is provided, such as delivery of a compost unit or a water efficiency kit, is a natural opportunity to employ this strategy. Two other strategies are worth considering in making use of commitment. First, existing volunteer groups can be used. In one study Boy Scouts asked residents to sign a statement agreeing to participate in a community recycling program. Those households that were asked to sign the statement were much more likely to participate than was a control group that was not asked (42% and 11%, respectively).¹⁴ Commitment strategies have also been shown to be effective when community "block leaders" implement them. A block leader is a community resident who already engages in the behaviour that is being promoted and agrees to speak to other people in their immediate community to help them get started. In this study, block leaders approached homes and gained a commitment from them to begin recycling. Those homes that committed themselves to begin recycling were far more likely to recycle than was a control group that was never asked to make a commitment.¹⁵

A Check List for Using Commitment

In considering using commitment, check that the following guidelines have been followed:

- Don't use coercion. Commitments should be sought only for behaviours that people express interest in doing. Hence, if a block leader approaches a home and asks if the residents are interested in composting, commitment should only be sought if the household expresses an interest in the activity. Indeed, research suggests that commitment will not work if the person feels pressured to commit. In order for commitment to be effective, it must be voluntary.
- Ask for a public commitment when possible. Research indicates that public commitments are preferable to private commitments. Asking individuals to have their names published in the local newspaper, for example, is more likely to have an enduring effect than having them make more private commitments.
- Ask for the commitment in writing. Once again, research suggests that written commitments are likely to have a more lasting effect than verbal pledges.

Table 1 contains a variety of examples of how commitments can be used to foster sustainable behaviour.

In conclusion, obtaining a commitment is a powerful way of increasing public participation rates in sustainable behaviour. When combined with other community-based

social marketing strategies, commitment further enhances the likelihood that your community-based social marketing strategy will be effective. In the next chapter we will see how prompts can be used to remind people to engage in sustainable behaviour.

Table 1: Using Commitment to Promote Sustainable Behaviour

Category	Commitment Strategies
Waste Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When distributing compost units, ask when the person expects to begin to use the unit and inquire if you can call shortly afterward to see if he/she is having any difficulties. • Ask households who have just been delivered a compost unit to place a sticker on the side of their recycling container indicating that they compost. • Ask people, as they enter grocery stores, to wear a button or sticker supporting the purchase of products that have recycled content or are recyclable (see also Chapter 4 on norm development).
Energy Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As mentioned previously in this chapter, when conducting a home assessment, invite the homeowners to participate. Conclude the visit by asking when they expect to complete activities such as weather-stripping or installing a programmable thermostat. Call back to help homeowners troubleshoot any problems they had with installation.
Water Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask households to sign a pledge form committing themselves to watering their lawn on odd or even days based on their house number. • Ask homeowners to make a commitment to raise the height of their lawnmower, thereby reducing evaporation and the need for lawn watering. • In going door-to-door with water efficiency kits (toilet dams, faucet aerators, and low flow shower heads), ask homeowners who wish to take the kit to make a public commitment to install it (e.g., have their names advertised in the newspaper along with others who have agreed).

Chapter 3

Prompts: Reminding People to Act Sustainably

Consistency is contrary to nature, contrary to life. The only completely consistent people are the dead.

Aldous Huxley

Several years ago my wife and I bought cotton shopping bags to use in place of the plastic bags stores provide. While we prefer to use these bags whenever we shop, they are frequently left behind in the house or car. The problem is not that we lack motivation to use the bags, but rather that we simply forget to bring them with us.

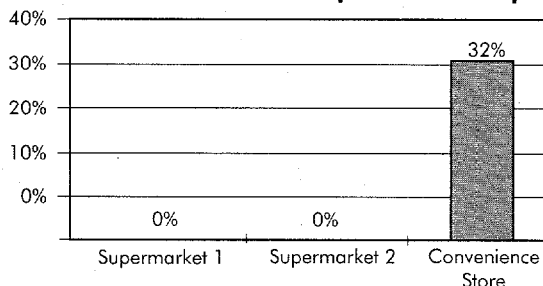
Numerous actions that promote sustainability are susceptible to the most human of traits: forgetting. Turning off lights upon leaving a room, turning down the thermostat in the evening, and selecting products that have recycled content while shopping are just a few of the many actions that we are apt to forget to do. In some cases, innovations such as a programmable thermostat can free us from the burden of continually remembering to carry out an activity. Most repetitive actions, however, have no simple “technological fix.”

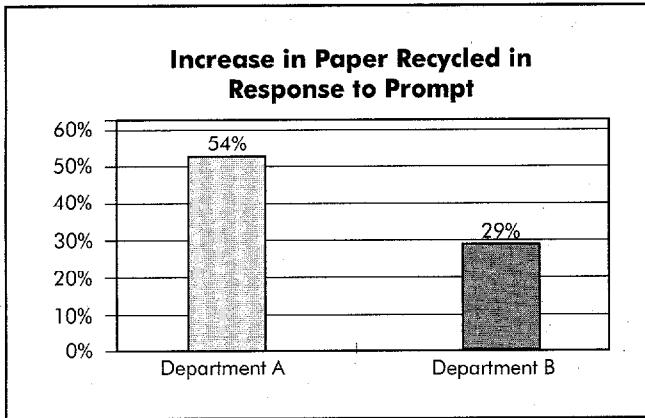
Fortunately, “prompts” are effective in reminding people to engage in sustainable behaviours. A prompt is a visual or auditory aid that reminds us to carry out an activity that we might otherwise forget. The purpose of a prompt is not to change attitudes or increase motivation, but simply to remind us to engage in an action that we are already predisposed to do.

Prompts abound. Slogans, such as “Act Locally, Think Globally,” “Keep British Columbia Beautiful,” and “Don’t Be Fuelish,” are all designed to promote sustainable behaviours. Despite a prevalent belief that prompts such as these are effective in promoting sustainable behaviour, nonexplicit prompts ordinarily have little impact upon behaviour. In contrast, prompts targeting specific behaviours can have a substantial impact. Scott Geller and his colleagues demonstrated the effectiveness of prompts in promoting the purchase of returnable soft drink bottles.¹ At two supermarkets and one convenience store the percentage of returnable bottles normally purchased was determined. After obtaining this baseline data, they distributed flyers at each of the three stores requesting that shoppers purchase soft drinks in returnable bottles. At the two supermarkets the prompts had no impact upon the purchase of returnable bottles. At the convenience store, however, the flyers increased the purchase of returnable bottles by 32%! Why were the flyers effective in the convenience store but not the supermarkets? For prompts to be effective they need to be delivered near the desired behaviour. In the large supermarkets, where shoppers are buying many items, the delivery of the flyers likely occurred well before the purchase of soft drinks. In contrast, in the convenience store, where only a few items are conventionally purchased, the delay between the presentation of the flyer and the purchase of soft drinks was much shorter.

Prompts have also been shown to have a substantial impact upon paper recycling.² In one department at Florida State University, a prompt that read “Recyclable Materials” was placed directly above a recycling container. The prompt indicated the types of paper to be recycled, while another prompt over the trash receptacle read “No Paper Products.” The addition of these two simple prompts increased the percentage of fine paper captured by 54%,

Increase in Purchase of Returnable Bottles in Response to Prompts





while in another department the same procedure increased the capture rate by 29%.

These and other studies support the notion that to be effective a prompt should be delivered as close in space and time as possible to the target behaviour. Accordingly, place prompts to turn off lights on or beside the light switch by the exit. Similarly, prompts to purchase products that contain recycled content should be on the store shelf at the point of sale.

Several initiatives to encourage source reduction are demonstrating just how effective prompts can be in promoting sustainable behaviour.

Prompts and Source Reduction

The Minnesota Office of Waste Management has designed a program entitled SMART (Saving Money And Reducing Trash) that provides communities with various educational materials for shoppers. One element of this program is the “shelf talker.” Shelf talkers are prompts that identify products that reduce waste and save money. Similarly, the Champaign, Illinois, Central States Education Center uses posters, flyers and shelf labels to indicate products that are environmentally friendly.³ The Center developed three sets of labels to affix beside product price codes. The labels indicate products that have “least-waste packages,” are “recyclable” or are “safer earth products.”

Least-waste packaging labels are for such items as bulk produce, Grape-Nut cereal boxes (no inner liner) and Rubbermaid Servin’ Saver containers (reusable packaging). This label is also used for economy-size items. Consumer reaction to this label has been positive, as labelled items reduce waste and are generally less expensive than their over-packaged counterparts. The recyclable label is assigned to products accepted in the local recycling program. In Champaign all metals, glass and paperboard are recyclable. To ensure that shoppers are not inundated with the recyclable labels, they are used only where recyclable products share shelf space with non-recyclables in order to provide shoppers with a clear choice. Where all items are packaged in recyclable containers the labels are not used. Finally, the safer earth product label is used to indicate household products that can be used as alternatives to products that contain potentially hazardous ingredients.†

The purpose of a prompt is not to change attitudes or increase motivation, but simply to remind us to engage in an action that we are already predisposed to do.

Affixing 700 long-term labels throughout a store takes several hours, considerably less time than it takes to adjust the 17,000 price labels that, on average, are changed weekly. Analysis of supermarket store inventory suggests that the use of these prompts has shifted purchases to recyclable containers. The impact upon the purchase of “least-waste packages” and “safer earth products” has not yet been determined.††

In Seattle, Washington, a “Get in the Loop, Buy Recycled” campaign has been operating for several years.⁴ Like the other initiatives, this program utilizes “shelf talkers” that identify products with recycled content. The program is advertised through television, radio and newspaper by both the King County Commission for Marketing Recyclable Materials and participating retailers. In 1994, 850 retailers in western Washington state participated. Relative

† Similarly, the Eco-Tag Labelling Program in Trenton, Ontario, uses three forms of prompts: recyclable, “best packaging” and “earth preserver.” This program is operating in an independent grocery store, Simples. To date, evaluations of the impact of this initiative upon consumer purchases have not been conducted. For more information contact: Jill Dunkley, Recycling Co-ordinator, Centre and South Hastings Recycling Board, 270 West St, Trenton, Ontario, K8Y 2N3, (613) 394 6266/(613)394 6850 fax.

†† To obtain more information about this initiative contact the Central States Education Center, 809 S. Fifth St., Champaign, Illinois 61820, (217) 344 2371.

to the month preceding the launch of the 1994 campaign, sales of recycled-content products increased nearly 30%.†

Using Prompts to Promote Sustainable Behaviour

Prompts can be effective for encouraging both one-time and repetitive behaviours that promote sustainability. One-time behaviours, as the name suggests, refer to actions that individuals engage in only once, but that result in an ongoing positive environmental impact (e.g., installing a clock thermostat, connecting a low-flow shower-head). Because these behaviours only have to be engaged in once, they are often easier to influence than repetitive behaviours, where an individual has to engage in an action repeatedly for there to be a significant environmental benefit (e.g., composting, source reduction). Given the difficulty of making lifestyle changes that promote sustainability, prompts may be of particular use in establishing and maintaining repetitive behaviours that favour sustainability.

A Check List for Using Prompts

In considering using prompts, follow these guidelines.

- Make the prompt noticeable.
- The prompt should be self-explanatory. Through graphics and/or text the prompt should explain simply what the person is to do (e.g., turn off the lights).
- The prompt should be presented as close in time and space as possible to the targeted behaviour (e.g., place a prompt to turn off lights directly on a light switch; place a prompt to purchase a product with recycled content directly below the product).
- Use prompts to encourage people to engage in positive behaviours rather than to avoid environmentally harmful actions (e.g., use prompts to encourage people to buy environmentally friendly products rather than to dissuade them from purchasing environmentally harmful products).
- Use commitment strategies (see the previous chapter) and norms (see the following chapter) to encourage people to act on the prompt.

† For additional information regarding the “Get in the Loop, Buy Recycled” campaign contact: King County Commission for Marketing Recyclable Materials, 400 Yesler Way, Suite 200, Seattle, Washington, 98104, (206) 296 4439, (206) 296 4366 fax.

Table 2: Using Prompts to Promote Sustainable Behaviour

Category	Prompt Strategies
Waste Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use “shelf talkers” at the point of sale to promote source reduction ● Distribute grocery list pads that remind shoppers every time they look at their grocery list to shop for products that have recycled content, are recyclable or have least-waste packaging. ● Place signs at the entrances to supermarkets reminding shoppers to bring their reusable shopping bags into the store. Also, distribute car window stickers with the purchase of reusable shopping bags; the stickers can be put on the window next to the car lock to remind people to bring their reusable bags into the store. ● Have check-out clerks ask consumers if they have brought bags with them. ● Affix decals to potentially hazardous household products during home assessments that indicate vividly (see Chapter 4) that the product must be disposed of properly. The decal should contain information on where to dispose of hazardous waste and a contact number. ● Attach a decal to the side of recycling containers indicating what can be recycled. When what can be recycled changes, simply place a new decal over the old one. ● Attach a decal to compost units indicating organics that can be composted and the basics of composting. Better yet, since neither what can be composted nor the basics of composting changes, require that this information be stamped directly onto the compost unit.
Energy Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affix decals directly to light switches to prompt that lights be turned off when rooms are vacant. ● Affix removable decals to the dashboards of new cars prompting drivers to turn off their engine while parked. ● Use signs to encourage drivers to turn off their engines while parked in locations where drivers frequently wait (schools, train stations, loading docks, etc.). Affix decals to dishwashers and washing machines encouraging that they only be used when there is a full load. ● Affix decals to all appliances that indicate the relative energy efficiency of the appliance (indicate the second price tag). This is presently done for major appliances in Canada.
Water Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To encourage lawn watering on odd or even days ask each homeowner for permission to place a tag on the outside water faucet. ● Arrange with local retailers to attach decals to lawnmowers that encourage householders to raise the level of the lawnmower. Additionally, this decal can encourage that the grass clippings be left on the lawn (mulched) as a natural nutrient. ● Have homeowners place an empty tuna can in the garden (to measure adequate watering). When the can is filled with water the garden or lawn has been adequately watered. ● Attach decals to low-flow toilets and shower heads indicating that they save water and money.

Chapter 4

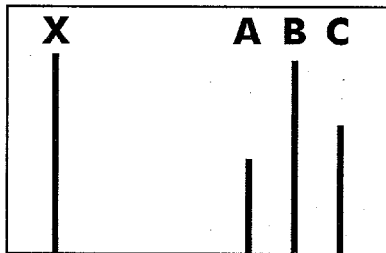
Norms: Making Use of Community Standards

Belief, like any other moving body, follows the path of least resistance.

Samuel Butler

12

Imagine that you have agreed to participate in an experiment on visual discrimination. Upon arriving for the study, you are asked to take your place at a table at which five other participants are seated. As you take your seat, the experimenter explains that this study will involve making perceptual judgments regarding the lengths of four lines. He then projects an image on the screen at the front of the room. On the left side of the screen there is a line labelled "X." On the other side of the screen are three lines, labelled "A," "B" and "C." Your task, he explains, is a simple one: to select which of lines "A," "B" or "C" is equivalent in length to line "X." The experimenter then proceeds to show a variety of slides. For each slide the other participants and yourself are asked to select the line that is equal to "X." After several slides you are beginning



to yawn and wonder how someone ever received a grant to conduct this research. On the next slide, however, something unexpected happens. In response to the set of lines above, the first participant selects line "C" as the line that is equal to "X." You rub your eyes and look again. Yes, she did say "C" but clearly that is wrong, you think to yourself. Your train of thought is broken as the next participant also reports that line "C" is equal to "X." After the third, fourth and fifth participants also select "C" you begin to question your own visual abilities, mentally make a note to have your eyes checked and then utter what a moment ago was unthinkable. "Line C," you hear yourself saying, "is the correct choice."

When Solomon Asch conducted this study, approximately 75% of the participants altered their answers at least once

to concur with the incorrect answers of others in the group (who, as you have by now surmised, were associates of the experimenter).¹ Perhaps you are thinking that these visual discriminations were difficult enough to lead participants to really question their selections. Unfortunately, they were not. When participants were left on their own to select which of the three lines was the correct match, the correct line was selected 99% of the time.

Asch's research is both surprising and troubling. Indeed, in responding to the findings, Asch wrote: "That reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call white black is a matter of concern. It raises questions about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct." Asch's findings are not unique. In a variety of settings, people have been found to alter their responses to be in line (no pun intended) with clearly incorrect answers given by others.

Conforming to the behaviour of others is more likely when the correct response is ambiguous. For example, in my social psychology class I have students remove their watches, close their eyes and estimate how long two lengths of time are without the use of any aids. At the end of the first interval, I ask the students to write down how long they believed the interval to be without consulting those around to them. After the second interval, I ask that they report out loud their estimation. Each year that I conduct this demonstration, the same outcome occurs. When asked to report the length of the second interval out loud, a "class norm" quickly emerges. In other words, students in the class modify their estimation of the length of the interval to be closer to what they hear others in the class saying. How do I know this? Unknown to the students both time intervals are the same. Indeed, when I ask students to read out their estimates for the first time interval (the one that was written down and is unlikely to be influenced by the responses of others) there is great variability in student estimations.

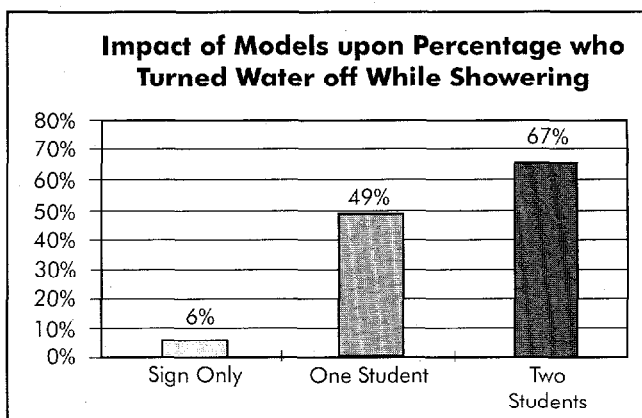
What strikes me as fascinating about Asch's research, and the time interval demonstration just mentioned, is that the task is inconsequential. In the larger scheme of things it really doesn't matter which of the lines is equal to "X," nor does it matter how long the time interval was. Nonetheless, in both cases people looked to the behaviour of those around them to determine how they would respond.

Norms and Sustainable Behaviour

Several studies have documented the impact that perceived norms have upon individuals engaging in sustainable behaviour. At the University of California, Santa Cruz, athletic complex the male shower room has a sign that encourages that the showers be turned off while users soap up.² This sign apparently has little effect on behaviour. On average, only 6% of users comply. However, when one person in the shower room follows the sign's suggestion, the impact upon others who are showering is substantial. To test the impact of one person upon the showering of others, an accomplice entered an empty male shower room at an athletic complex at a large university in California, proceeded to the back of the room and turned on the shower. When another student entered the shower room the accomplice turned off the shower, soaped up and then turned on the shower once more to rinse off. All of this was done with his back to the other student and without eye contact. When the accomplice modelled water conservation in this way, the percentage of students who turned off the shower to soap up shot up to 49%. Further, when two accomplices modelled water conservation, the number of people who followed suit rose to 67%. It is important to note that the changes in behaviour observed in this study were not brought about by punitive measures. No "shower police" would intervene if the people did not turn off the shower while soaping up.† As is further evidenced in the following study, in many situations it is sufficient to make salient a community norm in order to have a substantial impact upon behaviour.

Picture yourself leaving the local library and walking toward your car in the parking lot. As you get closer to your car, you notice that someone has left one of those annoying flyers under not only your windshield wipers, but

† Note that two community-based social marketing strategies are employed in this study: prompts (the sign) and norms. While the sign by itself was ineffective in altering the behaviour of those using the shower room, when it was combined with the norm behaviour changed dramatically. When possible, look for opportunities to use more than one community-based social marketing tool at a time.



everyone else's as well. You remove the flyer and crumple it up, but do you toss it on the ground? I am well aware that most of the people who are going to read this book will take the flyer home and put it in their recycling container, but what would "most other" people do in this situation? The answer, it turns out, depends upon what those around them do. In a series of ingenious studies, Robert Cialdini and his colleagues placed flyers on every windshield in a library parking lot.³ In one condition, as library patrons made their way back to their cars an accomplice walked past, picked up a littered bag and placed it in a garbage can. In the control condition, the accomplice simply walked past and did nothing. What impact did these simple acts have upon the library patrons? For those who observed the littered bag being picked up and thrown in the garbage, virtually no one littered the flyer. However, when the accomplice simply walked past and left the bag on the ground, over one-third threw the flyer on the ground! In a related study, Cialdini and his colleagues removed the human model and simply manipulated the number of flyers that were strewn about in the parking lot. When the parking lot was littered with flyers, the library patrons littered as well. However, when only one flyer was littered in the parking lot, patrons littered significantly less.

Using Norms Effectively

Clearly, perceived norms can have a substantial impact upon behaviour. How might they best be used to promote sustainable behaviour? To answer this question, it is useful first to consider two distinct forms of conformity. In com-

pliance, individuals alter their behaviour to receive a reward, to provoke a favourable reaction from others, or to avoid being punished. The change in behaviour occurs not because the person believes that the behaviour in which they are engaging is “the right thing to do,” but rather because there is a tangible consequence for not engaging in the behaviour. Compliance tactics, such as bottle deposits or charging user fees for waste disposal, are effective as long as the rewards or punishments are in place. Once the rewards and punishments are removed, the gains made by using compliance tactics are often lost. While compliance techniques can have substantial impacts upon behaviour, often they are not cost-effective to administer.

In contrast, conformity that occurs due to individuals observing the behaviour of others in order to determine how they should behave can have long-lasting effects. When we are unsure of how we should behave, observing others is an important source of information. Where possible, then, programs to promote sustainable behaviour should attempt to communicate what are accepted behaviours or attitudes. For example, communicating that the vast majority of people living in Ontario strongly believe that it is important to reduce waste and that they demonstrate this belief through participating in curbside recycling programs is an effective way to introduce more recent waste reduction programs such as composting and source reduction. By stressing the very high participation rates in blue box recycling, clear messages are sent regarding the per-

ceived importance of waste reduction by others. Finally, to be effective the norms must be visible. Certain sustainable behaviours, such as composting, are almost invisible in a community. Unlike blue box recycling, which communicates a community norm every time people put their containers at the curbside, composting happens in the backyard, out of view. How can composting be made more visible? Simply attaching stickers that proclaim “This Household Composts” to the side of the recycling container, creates and maintains a community norm for composting each time the blue box is taken to the curbside.

A Check List for Using Norms

Follow these guidelines in using norms.

- The norm should be noticeable.
- As with prompts, the norm should be made explicit at the time the targeted behaviour is to occur (e.g., upon entering a supermarket customers could be greeted by a prominent display that indicates the percentage of shoppers who purposely select products that favour the environment).
- As with prompts, when possible use norms to encourage people to engage in positive behaviours rather than to avoid environmentally harmful actions.

Table 3: Using Norms to Promote Sustainable Behaviour

Category	Normative Strategies
Waste Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affix a decal to the recycling container indicating that “We Compost.” ● Affix a decal to the recycling container indicating that the household buys recycled products. ● Affix a decal to the top of the kitchen garbage container saying: “No Organics in this Garbage.” ● Ask supermarket shoppers to wear a button or sticker that shows their support for buying products that are recyclable or have recycled content (note that agreeing to wear a button or sticker also increases the likelihood that they will actually shop for these products — see Chapter 2).
Energy Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attach gas mileage bumper stickers to very fuel-efficient cars. ● Attach decals to energy-efficient products in stores that indicate the number of people who believe it is important to purchase products that are more environmentally friendly.
Water Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To encourage odd/even lawn watering during the summer months, ask householders to place a sign on their front lawn that asks “Are You Odd or Even?” Communicate the percentage of people who comply with municipal requests to restrict summer water use. ● Attach decals to ultra-low-flow toilets. For example: “Don’t blush, but I am a little flush. I use 75% less water.”

Chapter 5

Communicating Effectively

Let us not forget that we can never go farther than we can persuade at least half of the people to go.

Hugh Gaitskell

Much of human communication involves persuasion. Whether done by a four-year-old or a marketing firm, the aims are the same: to influence our attitudes and/or our behaviour. The transition to a sustainable future will require that the vast majority of people be persuaded to adopt different lifestyles. How can we most effectively persuade people to adopt lifestyles supportive of sustainability? The purpose of this chapter is to outline some of the critical aspects of effective persuasion.

A Personal Story

The morning that I began to write this chapter my four-year-old daughter and I had breakfast together. Taryn often uses breakfast as a time to work out what we will do together when I return from work. At four, Taryn has already mastered many of the finer points of persuasion. First, she understands that to persuade me she must first secure my attention. Further, she realizes that she must compete with her sister, my wife, the radio, the morning newspaper and my own preoccupations, if she is going to secure a commitment to do one of her favourite things when I return from work.

Taryn usually secures my attention by asking that I sit with her at the children's table in our kitchen. This table has only two chairs, is secluded in a corner and, given its small size, places us very close together. Further, the table is too small an area upon which to open the morning paper. From Taryn's perspective, the setting is perfect.

Once I am sitting at the table and she has my full attention, the real persuasion occurs. In the summer, my daughter has three activities that she prefers above all others: going for a hike at a nearby beaver pond, having a picnic and swim at the wading pool, or going to the

playground down the street (which just happens to be very close to the best place to get ice cream in Fredericton).

Taryn rarely begins by suggesting all three options. Instead, she begins with the most preferred and least likely, going to the beaver pond. She understands that we will only go to the beaver pond once or twice a week, so on any particular day she has little chance of persuading me to go there with her. Nonetheless, she always starts with the beaver pond. When I begin to explain why we can't go to the beaver pond (we were there yesterday), she cuts me off by saying: "I've got a deal for you. We won't go to the beaver pond, but we can go to the wading pool and have a picnic." On that particular evening, we have a friend coming for dinner and so the picnic is ruled out. Finally, Taryn strategically turns to her third option: going to the playground down the street. Unconsciously she understands that she has the upper hand as she has already conceded the beaver pond and the wading pool. As a skilled negotiator, she knows that it is my turn to make a concession. Once she realizes that I am beginning to say yes, she closes the deal by suggesting that after the playground we can get some of the ice cream that I like (she makes no mention of her having any). As soon as I agree, she immediately says: "It's a deal, then?" As I acknowledge that "it's a deal," she gets up from the table to tell her sister that we are going to the playground after supper, and then for ice cream, while I am left to ponder how once again I have been out maneuvered by a four-year-old who is only going to become more skilled with age.

Use Vivid Information

All persuasion begins with capturing attention. Without attention, persuasion is impossible. In a review of pamphlets and flyers produced by governmental agencies and utilities on energy conservation, Paul Stern and Elliot Aronson found that most of the reviewed materials did

not meet this most basic requirement.¹ The material reviewed was inconspicuous, boring or both.

How do we capture the attention of those we wish to persuade? While ideally we would like to sit them down at a very small corner table, where we know we have their undivided attention, we have to resort to other means. One of the most effective ways to ensure attention is to present information that is vivid, concrete and personalized.

There are a variety of ways in which information can be made vivid, concrete and personal. For example, in a home energy audit a home assessor might utilize the householder's utility bills in describing money that is being lost by not retrofitting. Further, the assessor can provide information about similar people who have installed resource-conserving devices or describe "super-conservers" who have been exceptionally effective in reducing resource consumption.²

The power of vividly presented information has been demonstrated in a unique experiment carried out in California.³ Marti Hope Gonzales and her colleagues trained nine of Pacific Gas and Electric's home assessors to present information in a manner that was psychologically compelling (they were also trained to seek a commitment; see Chapter 2). Normally, assessors provide feedback to the householder regarding energy efficiency by noting the absence of insulation in a basement or attic, cracks around windows or doors, etc. However, in this study the assessors were trained to present this same information vividly. Below is an example of what the assessors were trained to say:

You know, if you were to add up all the cracks around and under these doors here, you'd have the equivalent of a hole the size of a football in your living room wall. Think for a moment about all the heat that would escape from a hole that size. That's why I recommend you install weather-strip-ping . . . And your attic totally lacks insulation. We professionals call that a naked attic. It's as if your home is facing winter not just without an overcoat, but without any clothing at all. (p. 1052)

Writing on the importance of presenting information vividly in home assessments, the authors state: "Psychologically, a crack is seen as minor, but a hole the size of a football feels disastrous. The fact that they encompass the same area is of interest to an engineer; but in the mind of the average homeowner, the football will loom larger than the cracks under the door. Similarly, insulation is some-

thing with which most people lack experience, but the idea of a naked attic in the winter is something that forces attention and increases the probability of action" (p. 1052).

Similarly, in describing the amount of waste produced annually by Californians, Shawn Burn at the California Polytechnic State University depicts the waste as "enough to fill a two-lane highway, ten feet deep from Oregon to the Mexican border."⁴ Clearly, her depiction is much more vivid than simply saying that Californians each produce 1,300 lbs. of waste annually.

Why is vivid information effective? Vivid information increases the likelihood that the information will be attended to initially, a process called encoding, as well as recalled later. That is, information that is vivid is likely to stand out against all the other information that is competing for our attention. Further, because it is vivid, we are more likely to remember the information at a later time. This last point is critical, since if the information is only remembered fleetingly, it is not likely to have any long-lasting impact upon our attitudes or behaviour.

Once you have found a way to gain the attention of your intended audience, you next need to consider who will present the information.

Use a Credible Source

Who presents your message has a dramatic impact upon how it is received. In general, the more credible the person or organization that is delivering the message, the more influence there will be upon the audience.⁸ The impact of credibility upon sustainable behaviour is demonstrated in a simple but elegant study. In this study two groups of homes received an identical pamphlet on energy conservation. In one case, the pamphlet was enclosed in an envelope from the State Regulatory Agency, while in the other the envelope was from the local utility. Prior research had shown that the State Regulatory Agency was viewed as more credible than the local utility, but would simply enclosing the same pamphlet in the two different envelopes have an impact upon home energy use? Yes. Those householders who received the pamphlet from the State Regulatory Agency carried out more of the advocated changes

One of the most effective ways to ensure attention is to present information that is vivid, concrete and personalized.

Suggestions for Presenting Information Vividly

- Research that has investigated public understanding of resource use demonstrates that the public has a poor understanding of household resource consumption.^{5,6} Householders grossly overestimate the resources used by visible devices such as lighting and greatly underestimate less visible resource consumption (e.g., water heaters and furnaces). Indeed, in one study homeowners were found to believe that lighting and hot water heaters consumed an equivalent amount of energy. This lack of understanding is reasonable, given the dearth of information that utility bills provide regarding home resource use. This void of information has been compared to going grocery shopping and discovering that none of the items that you wish to purchase have prices.⁷ All that you receive when you go through the check-out is a total for the items purchased. You are left on your own to estimate the cost of each item. To overcome this lack of information and the public's bias toward visible sources of energy use, create a graph that shows the percentage of home energy use by item. Rather than using bars for the graph, instead replace each bar with a picture of the item itself (furnace, water heater, major appliances, lighting, etc.). By presenting information in this vivid format, you enable householders to clearly see where they should be putting most of their efforts to reduce energy use.
- To vividly portray the amount of waste generated by a community, consider using a well-known local landmark. For example, the amount of waste Toronto generates could be described relative to the SkyDome.
- To bring attention to the amount of water that is used for lawn watering, prepare a chart like the one described above for energy use that depicts the amount of water consumed for lawn watering, showering, cooking, etc. Lawn watering will dwarf the other items.
- *Life* magazine recently vividly portrayed our consumptive lifestyles by taking all the possessions of an American family and placing them on the front lawn of their house. Next to this picture was a picture of a family from the Third World, once again with all of their possessions placed in front of their home. The contrast in lifestyles and the attendant impacts upon the environment were blatant. In our society, differences in consumption between the wealthy and the poor can be similarly displayed.

than did the householders who received the identical pamphlet from the local utility.⁹

How do you determine who will be credible for your audience? One method is to use a survey to determine the credibility of several different spokespersons or organizations (see the Chapter 7 for more information on survey techniques). A simpler method, however, is to search for organizations or individuals who are well known for their expertise in the area and have the public's trust. Perceived credibility appears to be based primarily on these two attributes. You might also consider having your initiative endorsed by a number of credible individuals. Endorsement from several sources is more likely to be effective since some individuals will be more credible to some segments of the public, and other individuals will be more credible to others.

Once you have decided "who" will deliver your message, you next need to concern yourself with "what" will be communicated. In contemplating the content of your message, you should consider: 1) whether the message will be viewed as extreme by your audience, 2) whether a fear ap-

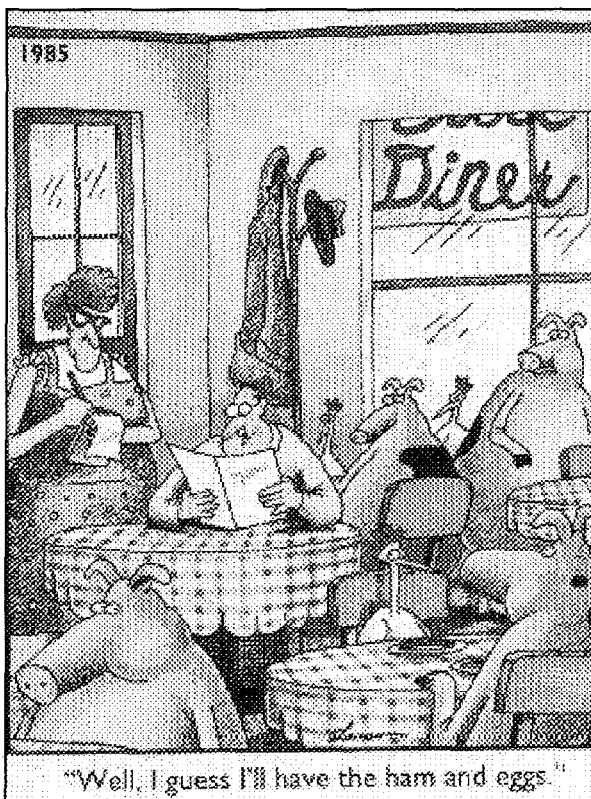
peal should be part of your message, and 3) if you should present both sides of the issue or only one side.

Know Your Audience

Before you craft the content of your message, you need to know more about the attitudes and beliefs of your intended audience. If, for example, you wish to advocate that people adopt simpler, less consumptive lifestyles, you need to know first how receptive people are to such a message. To determine your intended audience's receptivity, you need to conduct a random phone survey that will allow you to gauge the level of support for a variety of more and less extreme messages regarding less consumptive lifestyles. In doing this preliminary research, you are trying to find a message that has moderate support. Note that if you have the resources to target your message to different sectors of the community, you will need to determine the level of support within each of these sectors (e.g., the elderly, single parents, etc.). Why concern yourself with finding a message that has general support? Obviously, you

don't want a message that is fully supported, or you will simply be communicating what people already believe. However, you do not want to present a message that is too far removed from the beliefs of your audience. If your message is too extreme, your audience will actually become less, rather than more, supportive after hearing your message. In summary, then, you want to tailor your message so that it is slightly more extreme than the beliefs of your audience. Messages that are just slightly more extreme are likely to be embraced. Over time, it is possible to move people's attitudes and beliefs a great deal. However, you will need to have the patience and resources to do this one small step at a time.

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Carefully Consider Fear Appeals

Few public issues lend themselves better to fear appeals than does sustainability. Evidence abounds of the predicament we are in. Issues such as species loss, global warming, ozone depletion, and air and water pollution are just a few of the many assaults on the environment and consequently ourselves. However, is it wise to use fear appeals in creating communications for the public? There is no simple answer to this question, but here are some of the issues you should consider. First, literature in the field of

stress and coping suggests that we need to first appraise an issue as a threat before we are likely to take appropriate action.¹⁰ Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, for example, demonstrates the importance of communicating imminent threats to a wide audience. However, to be effective, fear appeals need to communicate more than just the threat we face. In response to a threat, people have what Richard Lazarus refers to as two broad coping strategies. Lazarus' research suggests that individuals respond to threats by using either problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping.

Problem-focused coping, as the name suggests, refers to taking direct action to alleviate the threat. In the case of global warming, problem-focused coping would entail using alternative transportation, increasing the energy efficiency of your home, etc. In contrast, emotion-focused coping might involve ignoring the issue, changing the topic whenever it is raised in conversation, denying that there is anything that can or needs to be done, etc. Whether someone uses problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping appears to be determined by their perception of how much control they have to correct the problem. If we perceive we have a significant amount of control, we are likely to use problem-focused coping. If we perceive we have very little, we are likely to use emotion-focused coping. Further, research that I have conducted suggests that regarding global issues, our perception of how much control we have is largely determined by our sense of community.¹¹ If we feel that in concert with others we can have an impact, we are likely to act. If, however, we feel little common purpose, we are likely to perceive that there is little we can do personally.

Using fear in messages, then, needs to be carefully considered. It is important that your audience understand the gravity of the situation. However, if you are not able to at the same time engender a feeling of common purpose and efficacy in dealing with the threat, your message may cause people to avoid, rather than constructively deal with, the issue.

In summary, fear appeals are a necessary part of directing people's attention to crises. However, they are likely to be counterproductive if they are not coupled with messages that are empowering. Further, repeatedly presenting a fear appeal can cause people to habituate to the message. Once people understand the "crisis," it is wise to move primarily or exclusively on to dealing with the solution.

Decide on a One-Sided versus Two-Sided Message

All issues have more than one side. However, in developing persuasive communication, should you address just one or both sides? The answer, as with most things in life, is “it depends.” If you are presenting your communication

The major influence upon our attitudes and behaviour is not the media, but rather our contact with other people. to an audience that has little comprehension of the issue, you will be most persuasive if you present just one side. However, if you are communicating with an audience that is aware of both sides of the issue, then you need to present both sides to be perceived as credible. As with the content of the message, deciding on a one-sided versus two-sided message once again underscores the importance of knowing your audience.

Presenting two sides of the issue has an additional advantage. By presenting the opposing viewpoint, and providing the counter-arguments to this viewpoint, it is possible to “inoculate” your audience against alternative views.

20 Finally, where possible, you will want to demonstrate that there is a win-win solution to the problem. Some environmental issues, however, do not lend themselves well to such a solution (e.g., cutting old-growth forest). In these cases, you will likely be best served by presenting both sides of the issue.

Delivering a Message

Research on persuasion demonstrates that the major influence upon our attitudes and behaviour is not the media, but rather our contact with other people. That is not to say that the media are without influence. Advertising can be effective in two ways. First, it is effective when the objective is to increase market share by switching the public from one brand of a product to another.¹² Increasing market share is a relatively easy process, given that the consumer is already committed to purchasing the product and there are few impediments to altering brand loyalties. Second, the media have an indirect effect by influencing the topics that we discuss. For example, the media may not directly influence me to be more energy efficient. However, if my wife and I both watch a documentary on global warming, our subsequent conversations may convince both of us to make our home more efficient.

Whether the contact is made personally or through the media, one of the more effective methods for increasing adoption of a sustainable behaviour is to model the behaviour we wish others to adopt. Modelling involves demonstrating a desired behaviour.¹³ Modelling can occur in person or through television or videotape. For example, studies have documented significant reductions in energy use in response to either a taped or live broadcast that demonstrated simple conservation methods and mentioned the financial benefits to be gained from carrying them out.^{14,15}

The adoption of new behaviours, such as recycling and composting, frequently occurs as a result of friends, family members or colleagues introducing us to them. This process is referred to as social diffusion.^{16,17,18} Social diffusion has been shown to be a factor in the installation of clock thermostats as well as solar water heaters. While social diffusion appears to be a powerful process, it has to date been greatly underutilized in attempts to promote sustainable behaviour.

Integrating Strategies: Using Community Block Leaders

Commitment, modelling, norms and social diffusion all have at their core the interaction of individuals in a community. Commitment occurs when one individual pledges to another to carry out some form of activity. Modelling results when we observe the actions of others. Norms develop as people interact and develop guidelines for their behaviour, and social diffusion occurs as people pass information to one another regarding their experiences with new activities. Recent research has documented that it is possible to harness these processes to have a significant impact upon the adoption of sustainable behaviours. By making use of community volunteers, or block leaders, Shawn Burn has demonstrated the powerful and cost-effective impact that some of these factors can have.¹⁹ Working with city officials in Claremont, California, she arranged to have homes that were presently not recycling randomly divided into three groups: the first received a persuasive appeal delivered by a block leader, the second received a written persuasive appeal, and the third was a control group.

Both the persuasive appeal delivered by the block leader and the written persuasive appeal made use of the same message. The control group homes were not approached and served as a comparison for the other conditions. In

the condition in which a persuasive appeal was delivered by a block leader, homeowners were approached by individuals from their community who were already recycling. These “block leaders” delivered a persuasive appeal and left orange recycling bags with the homeowner. In the persuasive message alone condition, homeowners received a written version of the same message and the collection bags. In the 10 weeks that followed the delivery of the messages, the results firmly supported the block leader approach as being most effective. An average of 28% of the homes visited by the block leader recycled weekly, compared with 12% for those who received only the written appeal, and only 3% for the control group. Further, over 58% of those households in the block leader condition recycled at least once in the follow-up, compared with 38% for the written appeal and 19.6% for the control group. The text of the appeal was as follows:

As a U.S. citizen you probably show your support for our country by voting and paying taxes. Beyond this you may feel that there is nothing more that you can do. However, there are things that you can do. One of these is participation in Claremont's recycling program.

Californians alone produce some 40 million tons of refuse a year—enough to fill a two-lane highway, ten feet deep from Oregon to the Mexican border. Currently, the average person in the U.S. produces about 1,300 lbs. of solid municipal waste a year. Most of this trash goes into landfills, and it is estimated that if present trends continue, nearly all of L.A. County will be without refuse disposal capacity by 1991. RECYCLING uses wastes instead of filling up landfills. RECYCLING extends resource supplies. RECYCLING IS EASY . . . SIMPLY PUT NEWSPAPERS, ALUMINUM, AND GLASS INTO SEPARATE BAGS AND PLACE AT THE CURB ON YOUR REGULAR TRASH COLLECTION DAY. Recycling makes a difference and recycling is happening. Over 80% of Claremonters favor the city's recycling program and other cities are calling to ask how Claremont does it. Help us do it, please recycle (Burn, 1991, p. 619-620).

Note how the appeal has made use of several of the principles described above. It has been made vivid (a two-lane highway, ten feet deep from Oregon to the Mexican border), a moderate threat has been used (L.A. County will be without refuse capacity by 1991), the proposed actions

are clear and specific (put newspapers, aluminum and glass into separate bags and place at the curb on your regular collection day), the effectiveness of the actions is stressed (recycling makes a difference) and norms are appealed to (over 80% of Claremonters favor. . .). In addition to the content of the message, those that were visited by a block leader would have likely been influenced by several other factors that have been discussed above. For example, the block leader was able to obtain a commitment, served as a model, provided evidence of community norms and assisted in diffusing the innovation (recycling) throughout the community.

Note that this strategy need not be limited to recycling. It could have similarly been used to promote the use of composting, source reduction, energy conservation or water efficiency.

A Check List for Effective Communications

Follow these guidelines in developing effective communications.

- Make sure that your message is vivid, personal and concrete.
- Have your message delivered by someone who is credible with the audience you are trying to reach.
- Using techniques described in Chapter 7, explore the attitudes of your intended audience prior to developing your message to ensure that your message is not too extreme for your audience.
- If you use a fear appeal, make sure that you couple it with specific suggestions regarding what actions an individual can take.
- Use a one-sided or two-sided message depending upon the knowledge of your audience regarding this issue.
- Where possible, use personal contact to deliver your message.
- In using personal contact, build into your message commitment strategies, normative information, vivid anecdotes and modelling.

Chapter 6

Removing External Barriers

Everyone confesses in the abstract that exertion which brings out all the powers of body and mind is the best thing for us all; but practically most people do all they can to get rid of it, and as a general rule nobody does much more than circumstances drive them to do.

Harrier Beecher Stowe

22 **C**hapters 2 through 5 identified a variety of tools to overcome internal barriers to sustainable behaviour. As powerful as these tools are, they will be ineffective if significant external barriers exist. If the behaviour is inconvenient, unpleasant, costly or time-consuming, for example, no matter how well you address internal barriers your community-based social marketing strategy will be unsuccessful.

The first step to removing external barriers is to identify them. Using focus groups and phone survey techniques outlined in the following chapter, attempt to isolate what external barriers exist and what can be done to address the barriers you identify. For example, at present approximately 30% of homeowners in Ontario participate in composting, compared with over 80% for curbside recycling. While many factors might explain these substantially different participation rates, it is likely that the inconvenience of obtaining a composter, and the perceived inconvenience of composting, are significant barriers. Indeed, in two studies that I have conducted in different Canadian cities inconvenience was on both occasions one of the most significant barriers to composting.¹ Further, in comparing households who compost seasonally with those who compost throughout the year the *only* factor that was found to distinguish these two groups was the perceived inconvenience of composting in the winter (remember the anecdote with which I began this book).

It is important to assess whether it is realistic to overcome the external barriers you identify. To do this, it is useful to explore the success that other programs have had in promoting the same behaviour. For example, if you learn that in another community 60% of households compost, identify what factors are different between your communities. Possible reasons for the greater success might include:

- home delivery of compost units;
- subsidization of compost units; convenient pick-up locations for compost units (e.g., parking lots at major shopping malls);
- easy access to information on the proper use of units once they have been obtained; and
- wet/dry garbage collection that makes composting as convenient as curbside recycling.

In addition, it is possible that the other community has brought in a user pay system for waste removal that helps to overcome the perceived inconvenience by providing householders with additional motivation to compost. Finally, it is important to note that convenience is in part a matter of perception. When people have experience with an activity, such as composting, they may come to see that activity as being more convenient than when they first began.² In one study, as individuals gained more experience with recycling bottles they found it more convenient. While significant “perceived” inconvenience is unlikely to be overcome, tools such as commitment and norms may be used to overcome minor inconvenience.

When inconvenience is overcome the effects can be startling. Providing each office worker with a recycling container for fine paper can increase the amount of fine paper retrieved from a few percent to over 75%. Further, when compost units are delivered for free, as they were in a pilot project in the City of Waterloo, participation rates can rival those for recycling programs.³ In that pilot project, a door hanger was distributed to 300 homes informing residents that they had been selected to receive a free composting unit. Of the 300 homes that were contacted, 253 or 84% agreed to accept a compost unit. In a follow-up survey 77% of these households were found to be using their compost unit.

Because the nature of external barriers can vary dramatically across communities, strategies for removing these barriers will have to be tailored to each situation. Begin by identifying what external barriers exist and then seek information from other communities on how they have dealt with the external barriers you have identified. Next, determine whether you have the resources to implement similar initiatives. If you determine that you do not have

the resources, you should seriously reconsider your options. As mentioned above, a community-based social marketing initiative that ignores external barriers is a recipe for failure.

In the table below are some external barriers to sustainable behaviours and some possible solutions.

Table 4: Examples of External Barriers to Sustainable Behaviours

Category	External Barrier
Waste Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is too inconvenient to obtain a compost unit. Solution: Deliver compost units door to-door as blue boxes were. • It is too inconvenient to compost during the winter. Solution: Provide a wet/dry system during the winter months in which organics are picked up free of charge. Charge during the spring, summer and fall for organic pickup to encourage backyard composting during these months. • It is difficult to identify products that are recyclable or have recycled content. Solution: Provide prompts that make their identification easier (see Chapter 3 on prompts). • The inconvenience of taking household hazardous waste to a depot results in little of this waste being diverted from the landfill. Solution: Provide semi-annual hazardous waste home pickup dates. Pass a municipal bylaw that mandates that hazardous materials must carry a sticker indicating that the product is a hazardous waste and when the pickup dates are.
Energy Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is too expensive to upgrade insulation or install energy-efficient windows. Solution: Allow renovations to be paid through savings in energy use. To ensure quality work is done, have contractors provide warranties for energy savings. • Homeowners lack the skill to install energy-efficient devices on their own. Solution: Use home assessments to instruct homeowners how to install these devices.
Water Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is inconvenient to purchase and install toilet dams, faucet aerators and low-flow shower heads. Solution: Have home auditors install these devices during home visits. • It is too expensive to install a low-flow toilet. Solution: Allow the cost of the toilet and installation to be paid for from savings in the water bill.

Chapter 7

Uncovering the Barriers to Sustainable Behaviour

The great tragedy of Science — the slaying of a beautiful hypothesis with an ugly fact.

T. H. Huxley

24

We each have hunches about why people engage in sustainable behaviour such as walking to work, composting or recycling. For instance, theories regarding personal motivations for recycling abound. Recycling, it has been suggested, is popular because it serves to alleviate our guilt for not making the more difficult and inconvenient changes toward sustainable living. This hypothesis suggests that curbside recycling is simply an antidote to the guilt we feel, for example, when just after placing our recycling container at the curb, we hop into our own personal global warming factory and head off to work. Other theories suggest that individuals recycle because it is convenient, those around us recycle, it makes us feel good about ourselves, or we are simply badgered into it by our children.

Hunches regarding what motivates people to engage in sustainable behaviour are important. These personal theories need to be identified for what they are, however: simple speculation. Speculation regarding what leads individuals to engage in responsible environmental behaviour should never be used as the basis for a community-based social marketing plan. Prior to designing such a plan you need to set aside personal speculation and collect the information that will properly inform your efforts.

To create an effective community-based social marketing strategy, you must be able to sort through all the competing theories and discover the factors that are associated with individuals engaging in the activity you wish to promote. Once you have this information, you are well positioned to create an effective community-based social marketing strategy.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to introduce a method to uncover what barriers exist for the behaviour you wish to promote. Taking the time to carefully research and design your strategy is the key to success. Designing and evaluating a marketing strategy has two phases. Phase

one begins with a thorough review of the current literature regarding the behaviour of interest. Following this review, focus groups are conducted to explore in-depth attitudes and behaviours of community residents regarding the activity. Building on the information obtained from the focus groups, a phone survey is then conducted with a random sample of residents. The phone survey greatly enhances knowledge of the factors that are associated with individuals engaging in the behaviour you wish to promote. If you have a consultant doing this research for you, it is wise to ask for an interim report at the end of phase one, in which the results of the focus groups and phone survey are detailed and promising social marketing strategies based on this research are identified.

Phase two, which is detailed in the next chapter, begins with further refining the marketing strategy. If the work is being done by a consultant, at this point the consultant should be working closely with you to elaborate the strategy to be used. The next step is to conduct focus groups, but this time with the objective of obtaining residents' reactions to the proposed strategies. If the proposed strategies receive positive reviews, you are ready to pilot. If not, you will want to make further refinements. In the pilot you test the effectiveness of the strategy with a limited number of people. Essentially, you want to know, before you commit to using the strategy throughout the community, that it will work. If the pilot is successful, you can be confident of success when you implement the strategy across the community. If the pilot is unsuccessful, then you need to make further revisions, and pilot again before broad-scale implementation.

As can be seen in the preceding paragraphs, the proper design of a community-based social marketing strategy is pragmatic, and each step builds on those that precede it. Effective design will not only help ensure success, but can also serve one other important purpose: cementing funding support. Increasingly, funders are demanding that pro-

jects have a solid research foundation and be evaluated once implemented. The tools introduced in this and the next chapter can help you to persuade your funders that your initiative is worth supporting.

This chapter details how to conduct phase one. In it you will be acquainted with how to conduct a literature review, plan and run focus groups, and develop, conduct and analyze a phone survey. The next chapter describes how to design, pilot and implement a community-based social marketing strategy.

For organizations that typically have research done by consultants, this and the next chapter are meant to provide information against which you can scrutinize the proposals of consultants. For organizations that do this work internally, this chapter will provide you with enough information to set out a clear research strategy. When combined with additional reading, the two chapters will provide those organizations that wish to conduct their research in-house with the information they need to do so.†

Conducting a Literature Search

There are four sources of information that you will want to tap into for your literature search.

- Thumb through trade magazines and newsletters for related articles. Often these articles are summaries of more extensive reports and can be good leads for where to search for in-depth information.
- You will want to find out what reports have been written on the topic for other organizations. These reports are often difficult to obtain but are well worth the effort. Begin by contacting organizations that act as information clearinghouses for the behaviour you wish to promote. For example, contacting the Recycling Council of Ontario, the Composting Council of Canada, the Citizen's Clearinghouse on Waste Management, The Waste Watch Centre, or the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators can be invaluable if you are designing a composting initiative.†† If a relevant clearinghouse does not exist, call several well-connected individuals to trace down reports that have been prepared for other organizations.
- Search the databases of your local university for related academic articles. Many of the articles that will be of interest to you can now be found by electronically searching databases. When you conduct these searches, pay particular attention to recent review articles that may synthesize the current state of knowledge on the topic.
- Once you have reviewed the reports and academic articles that you have found, call the authors of studies that are of particular interest. Often these individuals will have pre-press publications that you will not be able to find elsewhere. Further, they may currently be engaged in research that can inform your efforts. Academics can be a particularly useful resource for tracking down research articles and reports that you may have missed in your previous searches. Many academics now have personal electronic databases of research in their areas that they can often search while you speak to them on the phone. Mention the studies you have found and ask if there are other studies of which you should be aware. Often they will be willing to fax you a listing of relevant articles. Finally, ask if you can call back at a later point in your project to obtain further advice. Cultivating a good relationship with an academic who works in your area can assist you not only with keeping abreast of current literature, but also with issues related to research design and data analysis.

Finally, if you are having the literature search done by consultants, ask that they search for relevant information in each of these four areas.

† For further reading on questionnaire design see: Sudman, S. & Bradburn, N. (1982). *Asking questions: A practical guide to questionnaire design*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

†† Recycling Council of Ontario, 489 College St., Suite 504, Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1A5, (416) 960-1025, (416) 960-8053 fax; Composting Council of Canada, 200 MacLaren St., Suite 300, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 0L6, (613) 238 4014, (613) 238 7559 fax; Citizen's Clearinghouse on Waste Management, RR2, Cameron, Ontario, K0M 1G0, (705) 887 1553, (705) 887 4401 fax; The Waste Watch Centre, 16 Haverill St., Andover, Mass., U.S. 01810, (508) 470 3044; Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators, 25 Douglas St., Guelph, Ontario, N1H 2S7, (519)-823-1387, (519)-823-0084 fax.

Examples of Questions for a Focus Group on Composting

The questions that you ask in your focus group should be informed by the literature search that preceded it. Research on composting suggests that several factors distinguish householders who compost from those who do not. Household-ers who do not compost are likely to perceive composting as an unpleasant activity that may involve unwanted odours in the house or backyard. Further, they are likely to associate composting with attracting unwanted animals. In addition, they are likely to perceive that they have insufficient time to compost, and believe that composting is inconvenient. In contrast, those who compost have been found to be strongly motivated to reduce waste, gain personal satisfaction from “doing their part,” and appreciate the benefits to their garden that compost provides.

Building on these research findings, it would be useful to conduct at least four focus groups. Two of the focus groups would include only non-composters, while the other two focus groups would involve only composters.

Sample Questions for Non-Composters:

1. Would each of you please describe the single most important reason why you don't compost?
2. Some people think of composting as unpleasant. Is that a perception that each of you shares? If so, what do you see as unpleasant about composting?
3. Do you have any ideas regarding what could be done to make composting less unpleasant?
4. How convenient do you believe it is to compost?
5. What would make composting more convenient?
6. What else would you like to tell me about composting?

Sample Questions for Composters:

1. Would each of you please describe the single most important reason why you compost?
2. Some people think of composting as unpleasant. Is that a perception that each of you shares?
3. For those of you who do not see composting as unpleasant, did you at one time see it as an unpleasant activity? If so, what has changed your perception of composting?
4. What suggestions can you give me regarding how composting can be presented in our community as a more pleasant activity?
5. People who do not compost often describe it as inconvenient. Are there suggestions that you have regarding how you have made composting convenient?
6. What else would you like to tell me about how we might most effectively promote composting?

Literature Review

Since the factors that lead individuals to engage in sustainable behaviour are activity specific (see the first chapter), the first step in designing a community-based social marketing strategy is to review the research literature relevant to the behaviour you wish to promote. Prior to conducting your literature review, you should be clear on your mandate. If your position involves promoting residential composting, then your literature search is already well defined. However, if you have a broad mandate, such as promoting residential energy or water conservation, to expedite your search you will need to further clarify your

mandate before proceeding. Residential energy conservation, for example, can include behaviours as diverse as caulking and weather-stripping, installing additional insulation, installing clock thermostats, closing and opening windows, installing compact fluorescent bulbs or planting trees.

Focus Groups

The literature review will assist in identifying issues to be explored further with residents of your community through focus groups. A focus group consists of six to

eight community residents who have been paid to discuss issues that your literature review has identified as important (when focus group participants are volunteers there is a strong likelihood that they are participating because they have a greater interest in the topic than others in the community). The participants for the focus groups are usually randomly chosen from the community. To select the participants, simply choose random phone numbers from the phone book. When contacting the potential participants be sure to let them know how their names were selected.

Focus groups provide an opportunity to discuss in-depth the perceptions and behaviour of community residents regarding the behaviour you are planning to promote. To maximize what you can learn from the focus group, you should come to the meeting with a set of clearly defined questions that have been informed by your literature review. You will want to begin the session by informing the participants that they were chosen at random to provide your organization with information about the relevant behaviour. You will also want to reassure them that there are no right or wrong answers for the questions that you will be asking them and that what you are most interested in is their perceptions. Finally, you will want to remind them that their responses are confidential. Since you will be steering the conversation through the set of questions that you have created, you will want to have a coworker act as a note taker.

When the focus groups are completed, you will want to summarize the comments that have been made. One effective technique is to tabulate the number of times that a specific comment was made, or agreed with, by members of the focus group. In general, you should pay close attention to comments that are made frequently (e.g., "I would compost, if I could be assured that it would not attract rodents").

Phone Survey

Focus groups are an essential first step in enhancing your understanding of how community residents view the behaviour you wish to promote. However, taken alone this is not sufficient information upon which to base a social marketing plan. Focus groups are limited by the small number of participants and the qualitative nature of the answers obtained. The small number of participants makes generalizing the results to the larger community unwise, while the qualitative data place considerable limits on the types of statistical analyses that can be performed. Despite these limitations, focus groups provide valuable information about what issues residents see as important and also how they speak about the topic. As such, focus groups help to ensure that a more comprehensive survey will be well constructed and that questions contained in the survey will be readily understood by the respondents.

Several methods are possible for obtaining reliable information on the current beliefs and behaviour of community residents regarding the behaviour you wish to promote. These methods are person-to-person interviews, a mailed survey and a phone survey. While personal interviews are capable of providing reliable and in-depth information, they suffer from two significant limitations: they are expensive to conduct and take a considerable amount of time to complete. To conduct person-to-person interviews, a random sample of community residents would first be selected. Next, each of these homes would be mailed a letter introducing the purpose of the interview to them. Each household would then be called and, if willing, a time for an interview would be arranged. Paid interviewers would then travel to each home to conduct the interview. While this detailed process is occasionally warranted, conducting person-to-person interviews usually is an inefficient use of your resources.

Advantages of Phone Surveys

- Phone surveys cost less to conduct than personal interviews.
- Random-digit dialling of community residents is possible (ensures a random sample of community residents).
- Phone access to otherwise difficult to reach populations is possible (e.g., high-rise apartments).
- Refusal surveys can be conducted.
- There is potential for short data collection. Phone surveys are relatively easy to staff and manage. Compared with personal interviews, fewer staff are needed, the staff need not be near the sample geographically, and supervision and quality control are easier.

In contrast, a mailed survey is much less expensive to conduct and the entire survey can be completed in a reasonable amount of time. However, mailed surveys have a major drawback: the number of people who will complete and return the survey, or what is referred to as the response rate, is often between 20% and 40%. Such a low response rate brings into serious question the representative nature or generalizability of the findings. Given the inconvenience of completing and mailing the survey, individuals who participate are likely more interested in your topic than those who elect not to participate. As a result, participants in a mailed survey provide an unrealistic picture of community attitudes and behaviour.

Phone surveys have several advantages over mailed surveys and person-to-person interviews. First, compared with a mailed survey, it is possible to obtain a much higher response rate, providing a more accurate assessment of current community attitudes and behaviour. While it is possible to obtain a much higher response rate, clearly not everyone will agree to participate. However, those individuals who choose not to participate can be asked to complete a brief refusal survey. A refusal survey consists of three or four questions that are also found in the complete survey (e.g., does your household compost, education level, etc.). Further, the refusal survey normally takes no longer than half a minute to complete. Because the refusal survey is so brief, individuals who wish not to participate in the full survey frequently agree to complete the briefer refusal survey. By comparing responses of refusal survey participants with those of full survey participants, potential differences between participants and nonparticipants can be explored. If no differences exist between the two sets of responses, the results of the full survey can be more reliably generalized back to your community. If differences do appear, greater caution is warranted in generalizing the results.

In addition to providing a higher response rate than a mailed survey and the opportunity to conduct a refusal survey, phone surveys are less expensive to conduct and can be completed in a much shorter amount of time than can person-to-person interviews.

Seven Steps to Designing and Conducting a Phone Survey

Items to include in your phone survey will be guided by your literature review and the focus groups. But how do you begin to write the survey? Writing a well-constructed

survey takes time and patience. Here are some guidelines to make that process easier.

Step One: Create an Objective Paragraph

Begin by writing a simple paragraph that describes what the survey is meant to accomplish. This paragraph has two purposes. First, it will force you to be clear on what the survey is to measure. Second, once you have it completed, you can show it to others involved in the project. You will be spending considerable time writing, conducting and analyzing the data from the phone survey. You want to make sure, before you begin this process, that those who have a stake in the results are all onboard regarding what the survey is to accomplish.

Imagine that you are designing a community-based social marketing strategy for composting. You have two purposes: 1) to encourage people who are presently not composting to begin, and 2) to encourage seasonal composters to compost throughout the year. Given this background, your objective paragraph might read something like this:

Sample Objective Paragraph

This survey's primary purpose is to determine what factors distinguish year-round composters from individuals who never compost. A secondary purpose is to determine which factors distinguish year-round composters from seasonal composters.

Note that the objective paragraph for the survey indicates that there are two purposes, one of which is more important than the other. Giving priorities to different objectives of a survey can assist you later in deciding how many questions to devote to each task that the survey is to perform. Also note that comparisons between three groups are called for. In other words, your sample will need to contain three groups: year-round composters, non-composters and seasonal composters.

Step Two: Create a List of Items to Be Measured

Once you are happy with your "survey objective paragraph," the next step is to create a list of items that "might" be included in the survey. Note that at this time you are not concerning yourself with writing questions, only with determining the "themes" that will be covered in the questionnaire. Most of the items on your list should

Sample Phone Survey

1. There are a variety of ways in which a household can reduce waste. Please rate the frequency with which your home engages in the following waste reduction behaviours on a six point scale, where "1" is "never" and "6" is "all the time."

	never					all the time		D/K
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
purposely purchase products with less packaging	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
purposely purchase products made from recycled materials	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
recycle household papers (newspapers, writing paper, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
recycle glass and food cans.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Composting involves a variety of steps. These steps include collecting food scraps and yard waste, placing these materials in an outside compost bin, mixing the compost on a regular basis, and emptying the compost bin and applying the finished compost to a garden or flower bed.

Does your household compost? 1-Yes 2-No

If the household composts, then read "A" below. If they do not compost, then read "B" below.

A. With these steps in mind, we would like to ask you to respond to the following statements. Please rate these statements on a six point scale, where "1" is "strongly disagree" and "6" is "strongly agree."

B. While we understand that you do not compost, please respond to the following statements based on what you believe it would be like to compost, rather than what you have actually experienced. Please rate these statements on a six point scale, where "1" is "strongly disagree" and "6" is "strongly agree."

	strongly disagree			strongly agree			D/K
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
it is inconvenient to collect food scraps in the kitchen.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
collecting food scraps in the kitchen produces unwanted odours	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
collecting food scraps in the kitchen attracts flies.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
it is inconvenient to take food scraps out to the compost bin.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. If the household composts, then read "A" below. If they do not compost, then read "B" below.

A. Thinking of the reasons why your household composts, rate the importance of the following reasons on a six point scale, where "1" is "not at all important" and "6" is "very important."

B. Please rate the following statements on how important they would be in encouraging you to begin composting. Please rate these statements on a six point scale, where "1" is "not at all important" and "6" is "very important."

	not at all important			very important			D/K
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
you save money by decreasing the need for store-bought fertilizers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
you reduce the amount of waste generated by our household.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
you help develop of a nutrient-rich soil.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
you get feelings of satisfaction from composting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
cost of the compost unit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

come from what you have learned from your literature review and from your focus groups. Once you have created a comprehensive list, organize it into logical groupings. Place items related to behaviour together, group attitude items together and similarly group demographic topics. Once you have grouped the items on your list, you are

ready to check each item against your "survey objective paragraph." You want to determine if each item on your list furthers the purpose of your survey. If it doesn't, it should be eliminated. When you have your finalized list, you are ready to begin writing the survey.

Step Three: Writing the Survey

In writing the survey you will want most, if not all, of your questions to be close-ended. Open-ended items are difficult to analyze and greatly extend the length of your survey. Keep in mind that you will want to be able to complete your whole survey in 10 minutes or less. To be able to ask as many questions as possible in a short amount of time, you will want to use only a few types of scales in your survey.

Note that in the above survey, each of the scales has six points plus a “don’t know” option. Six or seven point scales are preferable to three, four or five point scales, in that they provide for a broader range of answers. Having a broader range is important, when most people are likely to be clustered at one end of the scale or the other. It is likely, for example, that on a four point scale most people would respond with a “3” or “4” regarding how frequently they recycle glass and food cans. However, when the scale is expanded to six items, answers will be more dispersed.†

Note also that only the endpoints are spelled out for each scale (e.g., in question #1, “1-never” and “6-all the time”). Providing just the endpoints lessens the length of time that it takes to read the survey to the participants. Further, it allows you to assume that the distance between each of the items on the scale (e.g., 4 to 5) is equal. If you provide labels for each of the items on the scale, the respondent can no longer infer that the distance between each of the items is equivalent. For example, we understand that the distance between 5 and 6 is equal to the distance between 4 and 5. However, we can’t assume equivalence with labels (e.g., is the distance between “6-strongly agree” and “5-moderately agree” the same as the distance between “5-moderately agree” and “4-mildly agree”?). Because the

distance between the scale items is no longer equivalent when you apply labels, there are more limitations placed on how you can subsequently analyze the data.

Finally, note that instructions to the surveyor are typed in capital letters to distinguish them from what is to be read to the respondent.

As you write your survey, you will want to ask four questions of each question in your survey (see box).

Finally, you should not have to write the whole survey yourself. You may wish to include questions that were part of other surveys (just seek permission before doing so). Further, you can use the demographic items in other surveys as guides for your demographic section (a standard set of demographic questions is provided on page 31).

Step Four: Pilot the Survey

Once the survey has been written, pilot it with 10 to 15 residents. During the pilot the wording and order of questions in the survey can be scrutinized. Questions that respondents find confusing or difficult to answer can be rewritten before the full survey is conducted. Further, the pilot ensures that each survey can be conducted in under 10 minutes. Miscalculations regarding the length of time that it takes to contact respondents or complete the survey can be very costly in long-distance phone bills and what you pay to have the survey conducted. Your pilot will help you to ascertain that your budget is realistic. *Do not include the data you obtain from the pilot with the data you obtain from the actual survey.*

Step Five: Select the Sample

Once you have completed the pilot and made whatever revisions are necessary, you are ready to obtain your sample. At this point you have two options. First, you may decide to have the survey completed by a survey research firm. Prices vary significantly, so shop around, but you can expect to pay at least \$16 per 10-minute household survey completed (in 1995 dollars). This price will include all charges, including conducting the survey, the refusal survey, and entering the data into a spreadsheet for data analysis.

Questions about Questions

1. Is this a question that can be asked exactly as written?
2. Is this a question that will mean the same thing to everyone?
3. Is this a question that people can answer?
4. Is this a question that people will be willing to answer?

† Whether you use a six or seven point scale will depend upon whether you wish to provide respondents with a midpoint. Using an odd-numbered scale provides a midpoint that allows respondents who are divided in how to respond to select this option. However, the midpoint may also be selected by respondents who are unsure of how to answer. Whichever option you select, stay with it throughout the survey.

Demographics:

I'd like to conclude by asking you a few questions to help us better classify the data.

1. Gender (DON'T ASK)

- male 1
- female 2

2. Which of the following ranges does your age fall into?

- 18-30 1
- 31-40 2
- 41-50 3
- 51-60 4
- 61-70 5
- 71-80 6
- 81-90 7
- 91-100 8

3. Which of the following best describes your home?

- a single family house (detached) 1
- a duplex or semi-detached 2
- rowhouse or townhouse (3 or more) 3
- mobile home 4
- apartment 5
- other 6

4. Do you own or rent your home?

- own/co-op 1
- rent 2

5. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

6. What is the highest level of education achieved by yourself or your partner?

- less than grade 12 1
- graduated high school 2
- some college or technical 3
- graduated college or technical 4
- some university 5
- graduated/university 6

7. The combined total household income before taxes for last year was:

- under \$10,000 1
- \$10,000 to \$19,999 2
- \$20,000 to \$29,999 3
- \$30,000 to \$39,999 4
- \$40,000 to \$49,999 5
- \$50,000 to \$59,999 6
- \$60,000 to \$79,999 7
- \$80,000 and over 8
- refusal 9

If you decide to conduct the survey yourself, you may wish to have a firm provide you with a list of randomly derived residential phone numbers for your community. How many people should you sample? There is no easy answer to this question, and here is where cultivating a good relationship with an academic working in the field can be of assistance. The size of the sample and how it is obtained will determine how confident you can be in your results. However, there is one other issue that will determine the sample size needed. Certain types of statistical analyses require a minimum number of participants for each factor investigated (usually 10 to 12). Therefore, if you are designing a survey to look at composting, and you have 20 different factors that you wish to explore simultaneously, you will need to complete roughly 200 surveys (20 X 10).

Step Six: Conduct the Survey

If you are doing the survey "in-house," you will need to train the people who will be making the calls. Following is a set of instructions that I often give to callers.

Step Seven: Analyze the Data

Many of the current computer-based statistical packages, such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), make analyzing data much easier than it was even a few years ago. Obtaining descriptive statistics, frequencies and comparing means is now as simple as pulling down a menu and selecting the variables and analysis that you want. Gone are the days when you had to write complex computer instructions to analyze data. The result is that basic statistics are now within reach of virtually everyone. However, you will want to go beyond obtaining the means and frequencies to lay the groundwork for your community-based social marketing campaign.

If you glance back at the survey objective paragraph, you will notice that the survey had two purposes: distinguishing between composters and non-composters; and distinguishing between year-round composters and those who compost seasonally. To answer these two questions requires multivariate statistics, such as multiple regression, discriminant analysis or logistic regression. Multivariate statistics allow you to determine the factors that distinguish householders who compost from those who do not, and also enable you to analyze the relative importance of these factors. For example, a recent study that I conducted

Survey Instructions for Callers

1. Rewrite the introduction of the survey (the first paragraph) in your own words. The first few sentences are crucial in soliciting the support of the persons that you hope to interview. You will want to be able to begin the conversation naturally, and impress upon them that their participation is important. I would suggest that you practise with one another to find a comfortable way to introduce yourself that covers what you need to say, but doesn't sound like a speech.
2. When the person is unable to participate, find out if there is another time when you can call back. If the individual is unable to participate at another time, ask if you can complete the refusal survey with him/her. Stress that the refusal survey will take no longer than a minute to complete.
3. Keep accurate records of your calls, so that later you can work out participation rates. You should record for each call whether the survey was completed, if an appointment to call back was made, if the phone was busy or not in service, or if the individual refused to participate.
4. Attempt to move quickly through the survey. I would suggest that you start the survey by saying that you will be moving quickly so as not to take too much of their time. You should time the first several surveys to see if you are doing them in under 10 minutes.
5. Read all questions as they are. Do not change the wording of questions, as this will bias the results.
6. Make sure that the person provides you with a number answer for questions with scales. For example, the respondent may say, "Oh, I would say that I mildly agree with that statement." You need to say, "would that be a 4 or a 5, then?" Even though it would be faster to interpret the answer for them, you will be biasing the survey if you do. You will find that if you steer the respondents toward giving you a number as an answer once or twice, they will likely then provide you with numbers throughout the remainder of the survey.
7. Answers that fall between the options are fine. If someone says they would be between a "3" and a "4" record their answer as "3.5," either by writing it in as "3.5" or by circling between the numbers "3" and "4" on the scale.
8. Do not read "d/k-don't know" or "n/a-not applicable" as an option for the questions that include this scoring possibility.

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with a former student, Laurie Beers, utilized discriminant analysis and revealed the following five factors were most important in distinguishing year-round composters from non-composters.¹ Note that these factors are presented in order of importance.

- Desire to reduce waste. Those who composted reported a greater desire to reduce the amount of waste they produced than non-composters.
- Non-composters perceived composting to be a more unpleasant activity than those who composted (e.g., they associated it with unpleasant odours, flies, rodents, etc.).
- Composters perceived the activity to be more convenient than those who did not compost.
- Those who did not compost believed that they did not have the time to compost.

- Composting households reported recycling glass and cans more frequently

Knowing which factors are most important in distinguishing individuals who have adopted a sustainable behaviour from those who have not is an essential first step in developing a community-based social marketing strategy. The above results provide a clear indication of some of the barriers that would need to be surmounted to encourage more people to compost. For example, perceptions that composting is unpleasant, is inconvenient and involves a significant investment of time are important issues that a community-based social marketing strategy would need to address.

Analyzing the data using multivariate statistical techniques is an essential aspect in the development of a sound marketing strategy. Less sophisticated statistical approaches such as calculating means or correlations are limited in their ability to provide information on the relative

Table 5: Barriers to Water Conservation and Community-Based Solutions

Barrier to Water Conservation	Community-Based Solution
It is inconvenient to locate and install water conservation devices.	Remove the barrier by having home assessors install aerators, low-flow shower heads and toilet dams. Provide turnkey services so that residents have toilets replaced with low-flush models (see Chapter 6).
Little thought is given to acting responsibly regarding water use.	Community norms regarding water use are developed and made salient. These now visible norms help to curb irresponsible water use and reward appropriate behaviour (see Chapter 4).
The appropriate actions are poorly understood or are confusing.	Actions are presented clearly and concretely. Wherever possible, changes in lifestyle are modelled so that the resident knows precisely what to do (see Chapter 5).
Conserving water is given little attention.	Develop vivid, personal and memorable messages that focus attention in an ongoing way on water use (see Chapter 5).
Individuals are supportive of water conservation, but lack motivation.	Residents are asked to make verbal or written pledges to conserve water. This public commitment greatly enhances motivation (see Chapter 2).
Individuals wish to reduce their water use, but forget to engage in the actions that will help them reach this goal.	Prompts are used to enhance the likelihood that residents will engage in actions that reduce water use (see Chapter 3).

importance of the factors that lead individuals to engage in the behaviours of interest to you. Unless you have a background in statistics, you will want to obtain assistance at this point. Many graduate students are trained in multivariate statistics and with a few phone calls you should be able to find someone who will do your analyses for you. Don't be daunted at this point. While the statistical techniques that are needed require someone who is statistically sophisticated, the results of these analyses can be presented in a straightforward, understandable format.

Report

If you are having a consultant do this work for you, you should ask for a report at this point that details the results of the focus groups and the phone survey. Further, based upon these results, request that the report detail promising social marketing approaches.

Strategy Development

The data from the phone survey should give you a clear indication of the barriers you face in designing an effective community-based social marketing strategy. In scrutinizing the results, make a distinction between internal barriers and external barriers (see Chapter 1). The techniques detailed in this book are designed to assist you in dealing primarily with internal barriers to the behaviours you are trying to promote. If you discover that you have significant external barriers to participation, such as cost and convenience, you will need to evaluate whether you can realistically remove these barriers. Designing a community-based social marketing strategy that addresses internal barriers but ignores external barriers is a recipe for failure. At this point, you need to assess whether you have the resources to address the barriers you have discovered.

Assuming that you have the resources to address the internal and external barriers that you have uncovered, you will now want to select the appropriate "tools" that have been introduced in this book to address these barriers. The table below provides guidelines for how the tools introduced in this book might be used to overcome internal barriers, in this case to water conservation.

Chapter 8

Designing and Evaluating an Intervention

Don't let us forget that the causes of human actions are usually immeasurably more complex and varied than our subsequent explanations of them.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Chapter 6 outlined how to identify internal and external barriers to sustainable behaviours, while Chapters 2 through 5 described various tools to overcome these barriers. Using source reduction as an example, this chapter will clarify the design, pilot, implementation and evaluation of a community-based social marketing strategy.

Designing an Initiative to Promote Source Reduction

Imagine that preliminary research (see the previous chapter) has identified the following barriers to consumers purchasing products that can be recycled locally or have recycled content:

- these products are reported as difficult to identify;
- shoppers report that they forget to consider these properties; and
- no salient community standards exist that support the purchase of these products.

Knowing that products with these properties are difficult to identify clarifies that their identification must be made more convenient (see Chapter 1). That consumers forget to consider these properties when making a purchase indicates that prompts may be an effective tool in promoting their purchase (see Chapter 3). Finally, the lack of community standards supporting their purchase implies that an

effective strategy will foster supportive norms (see Chapter 4).

What might a community-based social marketing strategy that incorporates the identified tools look like? As mentioned in Chapter 3, prompts are most effective when present at the time the behaviour is to occur. To encourage the purchase of these products, prompts are placed on the store shelves directly below the products. To identify products that have recycled content, the standard recycle symbol is used as a prompt, while a blue box symbol identifies products that are recyclable. Posters clarifying the meaning of these “shelf talkers” are placed prominently throughout the store (particularly near entrances). Additionally, pamphlets at check-outs and a video kiosk are used to educate shoppers about the importance of selecting products with these characteristics.¹

Note that occasionally it is possible to overcome two barriers to a sustainable behaviour with one tool. In encouraging shoppers to select products that have recycled content or can be recycled, the use of prompts makes it significantly easier to identify these products (addressing the first barrier) and increases the likelihood that shoppers will remember to consider these characteristics (the second barrier).

How might community norms be established to foster purchasing products with these characteristics? At the beginning of the promotion, asking shoppers to wear a sticker or button that says “I buy recycled” helps to establish the descriptive norms discussed in Chapter 6.† Note

† Asking shoppers to wear a sticker or a button as they enter the store will not only help to establish a norm favouring the purchase of these products and build commitment, but will also serve to highlight the campaign for these shoppers. Nonetheless, the sticker and button will only be worn for a short time before it will be removed. A more permanent way to establish community norms that support the purchase of these products is to ask householders to place a sticker on the side of their blue box that indicates that the household shops for recycled or recyclable products. The development of community norms can also be facilitated through the use of block leaders (see Chapter 5: Communicating Effectively) who seek commitments from householders to purchase products that favour the environment and indicate how to go about doing so.

that asking shoppers to wear a sticker or button not only assists in establishing these norms, but also bolsters commitment (see Chapter 3). Since people wish to behave consistently, agreeing to wear a button or sticker increases the likelihood that they will select these products.

The proposed social marketing strategy deals with each of the identified barriers to purchases of products with these characteristics. However, simply incorporating the tools discussed in this book into your community-based social marketing strategy will not ensure its success. Prior to implementing your strategy throughout the community, you should receive feedback on the proposed strategy through focus groups and you should conduct a pilot.

Focus Groups

Focus groups can provide useful information on the appeal and acceptance of a proposed strategy. To obtain feedback on the above strategy, several focus groups of five to six individuals are conducted. For each focus group, the purpose of the campaign is explained and participants are introduced to drafts of the proposed prompts, stickers (buttons), brochures, posters and video.† Focus group participants are asked whether these materials would capture their attention and whether they are clear and easy to understand (see Chapter 4). Once feedback is received on the materials, participants are asked if they perceive any difficulties with the proposed strategy and if they have any suggestions for how it could be strengthened.

Following completion of the focus groups, responses to the proposed strategies are tabulated to uncover any themes in participants' responses. Where warranted, the strategy is refined based on the feedback received. After refining the strategy, a pilot is conducted.

† Given the cost and time involved in producing a video, the focus groups are asked to review the story-boards that precede the development of the video rather than the video itself.

†† While in this example it is stores that are randomly designated to receive the intervention or serve as the control, frequently it is households or individuals that are randomly assigned to receive or not receive the intervention. Whenever possible, random assignment should be used. Random assignment ensures that groups you make comparisons between are equivalent.

††† Your primary concern should always be whether you were able to change the behaviour that you set out to change. Where possible, don't rely upon people's self-reports of their behaviour; they can be unreliable. Obtain water records, ask to look in composters, examine weather-stripping, etc. You will also want to examine people's perceptions and attitudes, but don't see these as substitutes for actual changes in behaviour.

Pilot

Think of the pilot as a test run, an opportunity to work out the "bugs" before committing to carrying out a strategy across the community. To pilot the above strategy, the store managers of two supermarkets are approached and asked to participate. The two stores are similar in the demographics of their shoppers as well as in the merchandise they sell. By the flip of a coin, one of the stores is randomly assigned to have the intervention occur, while the other serves as a comparison, or control.†† Prior to piloting the intervention, baseline data are collected for both stores. For the month preceding the introduction of the intervention, the rate of purchase of products that will be marked with prompts is determined by examining the computerized inventory records for these items. It is important to collect these initial data for both stores, since they may differ. Following the baseline period, the prompts, posters, buttons (stickers), pamphlets and video kiosk are introduced in the intervention store. After introducing this intervention, the rate of purchase of targeted items is monitored for several months.††† It is important to monitor the rate of purchase for several months or more to ascertain if introducing the intervention produces a sustained impact upon the purchase of these products. Indeed, frequently programs like this will have a follow-up conducted at a much later time (e.g., a year later to see if the original intervention is still affecting behaviour).

In determining whether the initiative altered consumer purchases, the rate of purchase of these items is compared with the rate at which these items were purchased during the baseline period (note that seasonal adjustments may need to be made to these numbers to control for increased purchases around events such as Christmas).

To ensure that the changes observed in the rate of purchase of these items are due to the implementation of this program and not some other event, the rate of purchase of these products for the control store is also determined.

If there is no difference between the baseline period and the period in which the intervention occurred at the control store, it can be assumed that it was the intervention and not some other event that brought about the changes observed in consumer purchases.

If when comparing inventory records prior to and following the implementation of the intervention little or no change in consumer purchases is observed, then the pilot will need to be revised until significant changes in behaviour are observed. Since in this proposed initiative the prompts are a central aspect of the campaign, it is natural to start by investigating them. By conducting in-store surveys with a random selection of shoppers, awareness and understanding of the prompts can be probed. If low recognition and understanding of the prompts is observed, then the prompts will need to be redesigned to be more prominent and clear. Further, the placement of the posters that explain the purpose of the shelf talkers should be examined. Did shoppers recall seeing the posters? If not, would simply changing the location and/or number of posters address this problem? The point of the pilot is to identify and address these problems before launching the campaign throughout the community. You should plan on there being problems and build into your plans the opportunity to refine your strategy until it works well. Once I revised a pilot six times before I was able to produce the desired changes in behaviour. While it was frustrating to have to make this many revisions, I was thankful that I was making the revisions to a pilot rather than to the larger project, where the problems would have been much more difficult and expensive to rectify. Expect problems, and plan for them; in the end when you implement throughout the community you will be rewarded for the time that you took trouble-shooting at this stage.

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Community Implementation and Evaluation

When the pilot has successfully demonstrated that the purchase of these products can be substantially increased by the community-based social marketing strategy, the initiative is ready to be implemented across the community. Now advertising and local media can be used to create additional awareness that would have been undesirable during the pilot. Limited advertising resources can be leveraged by creating public awareness through hosting media events to both launch the campaign and provide feedback on its success. Further, participating retailers can

Guidelines for Selecting Consultants

Many organizations will elect to contract out the work described in this and the previous chapter. Here are some suggestions for ensuring that you end up with a consultant who is competent to design and implement a community-based social marketing strategy for you.

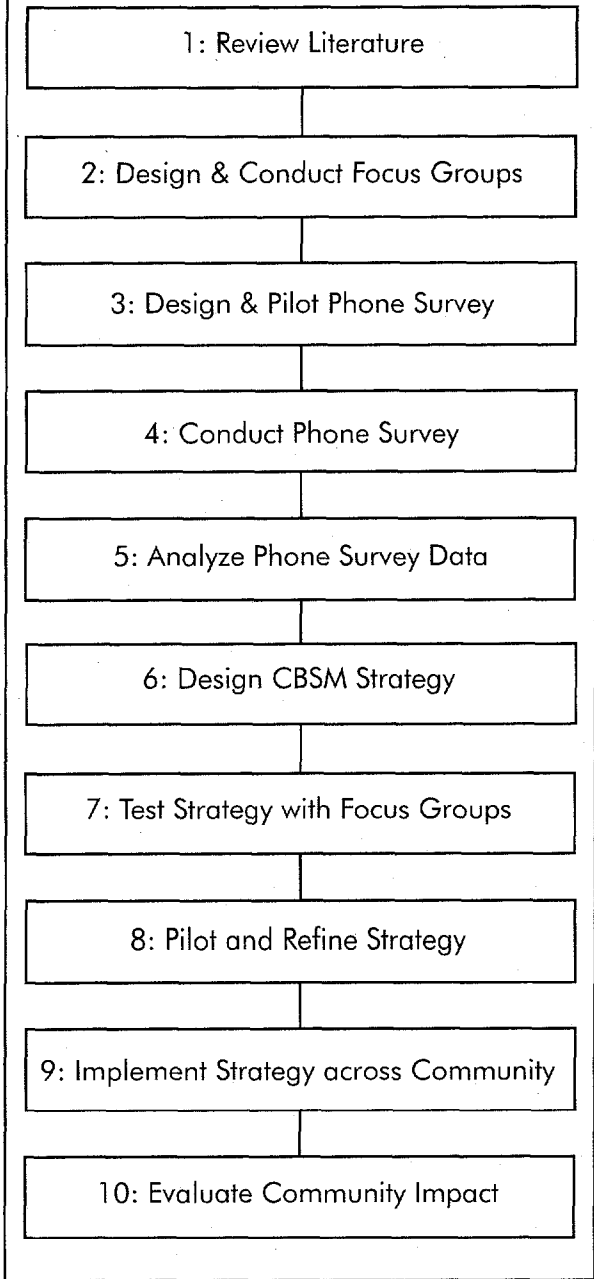
In the request for proposals ask for the following:

- that prospective consultants provide evidence of familiarity with designing and implementing community-based social marketing strategies and that the proposal integrates community-based social marketing methods;
- that proposals specify how the design of the program will be arrived at (use the methods set out in the previous chapter to scrutinize these aspects of the proposals);
- that proposals indicate precisely how the program will be evaluated once implemented throughout the community (use the methods set out in this chapter to appraise the proposed methods of evaluation); and
- that prospective consultants provide evidence of competence in research design and analysis (at least one member of the research team should have graduate-level training in research methods and statistics).

be encouraged to promote the campaign in their own advertising, greatly increasing exposure.

When implementing throughout the community, it is also important to build in a method to evaluate the impact of the initiative. In the case of the hypothetical project described here, a random selection of retailers is selected to participate in the evaluation. Baseline data from the electronic inventories of these stores are obtained and then compared with changes that occurred in the purchase of the targeted products following the launch of the campaign. To provide a stable picture of the impact that this campaign had upon the purchase of these products, the average increase in the purchase of these products across the evaluated stores is determined. This information not only serves as a critical test of the success of the initiative, but also fulfills two other important functions. First, it is important to provide consumers with feedback regarding the impact that their changes in behaviour have upon the

Overview of Steps in Designing and Evaluating a Program



environment. In other words, an element of a successful community-based social marketing strategy is providing feedback that reinforces changes that people have made. The media will often provide you with a cost-effective way of getting this information back to consumers, though other possibilities exist. One vivid and ongoing form of feedback is to provide shoppers in each retail store with a yardstick of their efforts. By setting up a display in which the percentage increase in the purchase of these products is updated on a regular basis, shoppers can be provided with an ongoing source of feedback and encouragement (the use of feedback can also help to establish a norm that favours this form of shopping). Second, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, program evaluation provides evidence of concrete results, which is most convincing to funders that a campaign is worth continued support.

The Final Report: Getting the Word Out

After conducting a literature review, running focus groups, writing, conducting and analyzing a phone survey, devising a strategy, scrutinizing it with focus groups, piloting the strategy, revising the strategy, implementing it throughout the community and evaluating it, you should be finished, right? Wrong. Community-based social marketing is an emerging field that holds great promise for moving us toward a sustainable future. Each time someone goes through the stages set out in this chapter, collectively we are all a little richer. Take the time to write up a final report and make sure that people know about it. Whether your community-based social marketing strategy was successful or not, others can learn from your efforts.

Chapter 9

Concluding Thoughts

A friend, who works for a regional municipality in Ontario, told me that while he was reading a draft of this book he felt uncomfortable. His discomfort, he explained, came from realizing that the tools and strategies set out here are more effective than those he presently uses, but that also more work would be involved in implementing them. Resistance to using community-based social marketing strategies, he correctly pointed out, has to be overcome even in those who believe in their utility.

Overcoming Resistance in Yourself

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Clearly, the tools and strategies detailed in this book will initially require more work. Implementing a community-based social marketing strategy requires careful preliminary research, strategy development, piloting, implementation and evaluation. However, this attention to detail is in large part why these strategies are so successful. In short, following the steps described in the previous two chapters greatly increases the success of your program. For example:

- the literature review will provide you with confidence that your program will build on the work of others;
- the focus groups and phone survey will allow you to determine what internal and external barriers will need to be overcome and enable you to design an effective community-based social marketing strategy to surmount them;
- focus groups prior to piloting your strategy will allow you to refine its delivery;
- piloting the strategy will allow you to test its impact and further refine the strategy to increase its effectiveness; and

- evaluating the program once it has been implemented across the community will allow you to speak with confidence regarding its impact and provide you with the data you need to ensure continued funding.

Program design and evaluation are critical components of community-based social marketing, but they are not unique to it. Increasingly, program design and evaluation are being mandated for a wide range of social programs. As governments are increasingly held accountable for the wise use of tax dollars, program design and evaluation will become the norm rather than the exception. Further, over time program design and evaluation reduce the cost and effort that have to be expended to bring about sustainable behaviour. Programs that are not properly designed and evaluated are less effective. As a consequence, several such programs frequently have to be developed and delivered to bring about the same change in behaviour as one well-designed program. In short, properly designing and evaluating a community-based social marketing strategy will entail more work on your part, but this effort will be rewarded through both greater impact and lower long-term costs.

Overcoming Resistance among Colleagues

The approaches detailed in this book are new and are likely to be seen as unproven by your colleagues. How can you overcome resistance from them? It will help if you are prepared for some of the problems that you might encounter.

You will need to be prepared to deal with concerns your colleagues will have over the length of time that it will take to design and implement a community-based social marketing strategy. You will need to reassure them that the approaches outlined here are more likely to succeed, and as a

result resources and staff will be used more responsibly. Additionally, be prepared that some of your colleagues may not want to evaluate programs for fear that evaluation might produce negative results. You may also encounter resistance from colleagues who feel that using these approaches amounts to an explicit admission that past initiatives were not designed as effectively as they might have been.

Here are some suggestions for increasing support for community-based social marketing in your organization:

- ask reluctant colleagues to read this book;
- bring in a speaker to introduce community-based social marketing to your organization;
- distribute articles that demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based social marketing strategies (this book references many articles that demonstrate the utility of the approaches described here);
- ask someone who has successfully implemented a community-based social marketing strategy to come and speak to your organization about it;
- ask that current programs be rigorously evaluated. It is easy to believe that a program is working if little or no data exist to measure its success.

Finally, be prepared that it may take a considerable length of time to overcome resistance among your colleagues. Indeed, you may put forward several community-based social marketing proposals only to find each of them rejected. Another friend of mine has been attempting to implement community-based social marketing strategies for over two years. He has yet to win approval. Remember, as you advocate these strategies with resistant colleagues you are slowly creating new norms regarding how programs should be carried out. You can be confident that eventually community-based social marketing strategies will replace more conventional approaches for promoting sustainable behaviour for one simple reason: they are more effective.

Conclusion

The community-based social marketing tools set out in this book, and the methods that I have outlined to design and evaluate a program, hold great promise in promoting sustainable behaviour. As we move rapidly toward a world with twice today's population, making the transition to sustainable lifestyles will become ever more urgent and these tools and methods will become increasingly important.

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Chapter 8: Designing and Evaluating an Intervention

- ¹ The pilot detailed in this chapter is based in large part upon a project that Nancy Gallant, my honours student, and I are designing.

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Dr. Doug McKenzie-Mohr is an environmental psychologist who specializes in designing programs to promote sustainable behaviour. For the last decade he has researched the factors that lead individuals to be active on global issues. For this research, he has been awarded the Canadian Psychological Association's "Psychologists for Social Responsibility Research and Social Action Award," and the "Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues Public Advocacy Fellowship."



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