Elements of a Good Public Awareness Campaign: At a Glance

A good public awareness campaign is a well-defined message or concrete call to action presented through a clear story line to a precise target audience in relatable terms. This can be achieved by putting the right components in the right order, action and visual aids. But most importantly by engaging a simple and direct approach towards the audience.

Some measures directly aim to change behaviour (e.g. not to speed, to use seat belts, to have lights on your bicycle, etc.). It is important that the message be short, clear and unambiguous. Furthermore, it is important that a campaign make use of different media, e.g. bill boards, radio and television, leaflets, etc., and is repeated several times.¹

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Explanatory Note for the Reader

This document consolidates the experience of different organizations in the public awareness campaigns and is intended to provide the snapshot of the main elements of any public awareness campaign at the planning, developing and implementing stages of a campaign. The universality of these elements makes the content applicable to all the public awareness campaigns, regardless to what their subject of matter is – road safety or a public health issue. The document is designed primarily for civil society organizations, Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and government institutions designing and implementing campaigns on a behavioural change.

The document has been developed in the framework of TRACECA Road Safety II project funded by the European Union and aimed at addressing the road safety issue by building and fostering multi-sector partnership among key road safety stakeholders, enhancing their capability in different areas of road safety and changing attitude and behaviour of the road users, through the implementation of community-based pilot interventions and small-scale public awareness campaigns.

Introduction

Public awareness campaign is a vital component needed in order to achieve the most effective result in road safety. On the other hand, it is important to understand that these campaigns are just components and will not function by themselves. Proper legislation is needed prior to the campaign and an enforcement strategy has to be prepared and be in practise to have the desired impact in road safety.

Public awareness campaigns are divided into three types being differentiated with the ultimate aim; some are designed to raise awareness of an issue or to inform, others are created to change attitudes, while the third part is to change behaviour, as part of a package of measures. A number of variables directly influence the level of anticipated changes and are important to take into consideration when attempting to conduct a campaign for changing road users’ behaviour. Raising awareness that the threat exists, focusing on severity and susceptibility, while providing evidence that the recommended response will avert the mentioned threat. Among other variables are also physical or cultural barriers and their removal, if possible. The audience should always be reminded of the benefits that would

derive from following the suggested behavioural changes. However, it is important to ensure that individuals do not feel manipulated or unable to avert the threat.

The delivery method also creates obvious divisions amongst public awareness campaigns. Sometimes, public awareness campaigns are overly persuasive; other times, they simply aim to inform and enlighten. However, even though their aim varies and different delivery methods are chosen depending on what they aim to achieve, the purpose of every public awareness campaign is the same: *to inform the general public audience about a certain topic or issue, which will achieve one or more of the identified aims of the campaign that were mentioned earlier.*

Therefore, the final goal is to spread information with anticipation of a change within the society regarding the specific issue. As for example, explaining benefits of wearing a seatbelt in order to convince more car users to use them. The beginning, ending and the process of changing behaviour is conveniently standardised into 6 stages described below, that the public should experience in order to create a permanent effect. Afterwards, ten core elements of a public awareness campaign can be found, which were designed to elaborate the steps required to create, develop and utilise a campaign with the anticipated outcomes. The information for both segments is based on different documents and sources reviewed, while examining the topics of behavioural and attitude change, as well as the public awareness campaign strategy.

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<tr>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Behavioural Change</th>
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1. **Interest**
   - **Identify a Precise Target Group** – Aim at the public lacking expertise on the issue and the most affected population. This allows a more efficient message delivery.
   - **Develop Interest** – Use a clear story in relatable terms, appropriate to a wider public to create a momentum for the campaign. This starts the practical part of the campaign. *(Interest is not Knowledge)*

2. **Concern & Awareness**
   - **Develop Concern** – Create circumstances for people to experience the issue through visual aid and other techniques. *(Concern is the first step towards awareness)*

3. **Knowledge**
   - **Provide Information** – Public is willing to broaden their knowledge at this point.

4. **Action**
   - **Engage Action** – Public is willing to engage themselves on this issue.

5. **Final Stage** – Results should start to be obvious via behavioural change and the impact that has on the main issue. *(i.e. Less people are drinking driving – decrease in road crash fatalities)*
Core Elements – 10 Stages of a Public Awareness Campaign

As mentioned earlier, based on the experience of different public awareness campaigns, they should have the following core elements. The stages are described in a consecutive manner to demonstrate their linear application, while the circular diagram shows the constructive and reusable nature of public awareness campaigns.

1. **Research**
   - Identify the target audience and their main behavioural traits and issues – As any pre-planning activity, it will save time in further development of the campaign and increase the effectiveness due to precision.
   - Select data/evidence-based material to base the campaign on – Such choice of materials is better received by public and has a more long-lasting consequence on the behavioural change.

2. **Set the Target**
   - Define problem – It is crucial to identify a specific issue that the campaign will deal with, before actual planning begins, in order to avoid ambiguities in further steps.
   - Determine objectives – Another pre-planning step will prevent you from having an open ending to the campaign, and aim towards tangible results.
   - Examine the validity of the cause and approach – Being certain that the issue addressed in the campaign and the chosen method for behaviour change has to be approved at this point in order to avoid wasteful activity.
3. **Plan the Campaign**
   - Agree on supporting activities – Political support is essential both at the national or local levels, depending on the issues. Identify the key interventions required to support the desired change in behaviour and the organisations responsible.
   - Identify a manager – Every successful campaign requires an influential Leading Agency, whose sphere of influence is covering the issue addressed by the campaign, and who will manage the campaign. The credibility behind the chosen agency is essential to grasp the audience’s attention and have an impact on them.

4. **Use the Right Skills** - Specialists with behavioural and social science skills should design the content of the campaign and identify the target audience and messages. Delivering the message requires marketing, social advocacy and advertising skills.

5. **Communications Brief**
   - This element is one of the key components that ties the preparatory and executive parts of any campaign. – Summarize the behavioural and social objectives of the campaign, the supporting government/community interventions, the target audience and the scope of the campaign. Outline a communications strategy, based on market segmentation and targeting, and the resources available to support the campaign. The strategy derives from information collected in previous steps and will serve as a personalised guide for a campaign in question.

6. **Seek Expertise** – In comparison to the Leading Agency, this segment is concerned with the marketing aspect and the overall design of the Awareness Campaign. Internal or external experts have to be engaged in order to put together a high quality campaign, but which has to collaborate with the Leading Agency.

7. **Develop the Campaign** – Research is crucial to developing effective approaches and they are likely to vary for different target groups in different cultures. Other government, community and police supporting actions should be planned in conjunction with the campaign. (Related to the “Successful Public Awareness Campaign” stages)

8. **Implementation**
   - Deliver the Campaign – Implement the plan, in a way that the launch of the Campaign is receiving a lot of publicity, in order to get a good momentum for raising awareness about the chosen issue.
   - Utilise “free” media – Do not neglect all media outlets, because many of them work.

9. **Evaluate the Impact** – Measure short-term behavioural changes through a pre- and post-campaign survey. Anticipate long-term behavioural changes over a period of time.

10. **Repeat** the process for a new campaign and use the experience from previous one to be more efficient, regardless of the issue.
Delivery Technique and Approach

**An efficient teaching technique** is through experience; therefore, the campaign needs to create enough action for people to have a possibility to feel the problem and try the solution. This can be achieved through many sources, besides physical engagement; a good one is visual aid.

- **Experience** – emotions triggered by associations related to the new information. For example, when learning about children getting hurt, people can imagine that, which causes an association of concern towards that topic.
- **Visual aid** – makes the process of creating concern easier because this technique allows a more globally understood explanation to the problem, and is in most cases more available to a wider audience. For example, a video of a person hitting someone while speeding and this resulting in a death case will allow the viewer to understand the message that speeding is dangerous and could result in somebody’s life being taken away. Therefore, it is a very important tool for creating a good awareness campaign.

**Approach** is one of the most important aspects whether the public awareness campaign will be a success.

- The key is **simplicity** – no explanation required; do not communicate the entire problem, but communicate the campaign.
  - The big problem: Road Safety → Specific issue (risk factor): Speeding
- **Focus** on a specific part of a problem rather than tackling the entire issue.
- it is important to have a **direct approach** in communication so that the audience can relate easier.

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<th>Methodology Standards Checklist:</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ The time frame should be between 6 and 9 months for the entire process</td>
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<td>✓ A campaign needs to have a focus on a single risk factor for maximum effectiveness</td>
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<td>✓ A campaign needs to incorporate both legislative and enforcement aspect of the issue</td>
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<td>✓ Approach that is used to pursue changes has to be realistic or forceful</td>
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<td>✓ During the delivery stage, Traditional Mass Media products have to be prioritised</td>
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<td>✓ Delivery stage should last approximately one to one and a half month, preferably through local media</td>
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<td>✓ Budget is always lower than what is expected</td>
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<td>✓ A campaign should have relatively high response (&lt; 50%)</td>
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Reference documents:


