How do I motivate people to take action?

One of the challenges of working with people to change their practices or adopt new behaviors is this: Engagement does not often translate into action. We are often engaged in many issues but don't act.

For instance, many, many people who smoke cigarettes know perfectly well that smoking is bad for your health, and yet they smoke. Many, many people know that exercise is essential for health, but still don't exercise. Knowing and doing are two very different things, and sometimes not connected at all!

In this module, we will explore the basics of Community-based Social marketing, a set of strategies to get people not only engaged in an issue, but to motivate them to act on their engagement.

Learning Activity

Visit the following sites and learn about the psychology and sociology of behavior change.

The Psychology of Environmental Decision-making-
http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=12949
Community-based Social Marketing-
http://www.cbsm.com/pages/guide/preface/

The mistake many of us make in framing environmental messages is to assume that information is enough to motivate people to change their behaviors. It's not.

Social media is a popular tool to engage people because it is relationship focused, and is more effective than ads.

We assume that changes in attitudes and increased knowledge will lead to change. Many education and outreach campaigns rely on information alone, or as their primarily strategy, and neglect to actually engage people in taking action on the issue they are trying to affect.
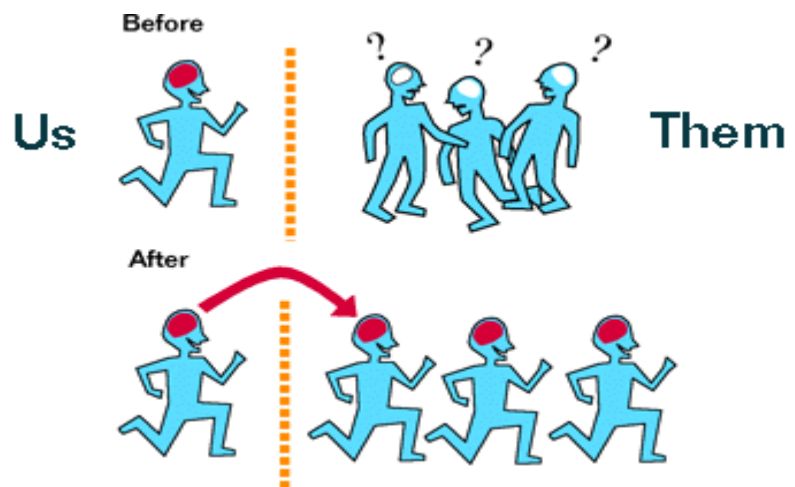
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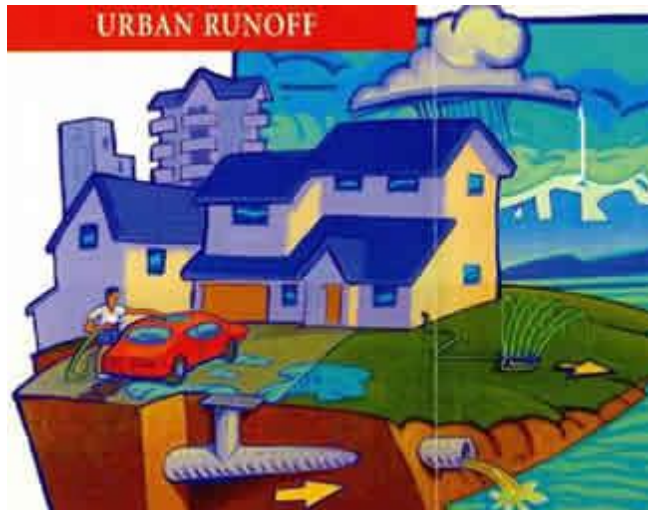
Changing behavior is difficult. Advertising is effective in getting people to choose one brand over another (they've already adopted the behavior of consuming), but getting them to behave in a different way or develop a different habit is difficult.

Traditional communications strategies are relatively easy and formulaic. Pushing out information and developing written materials, advertising, pamphlets, and information sheets - is fairly easy.

We don't adequately evaluate our programs. Campaigns often evaluate outputs (number of people reach, participants, flyers distributed) rather than outcomes (behavior change, change in resource use, change in resource quality). Or we don't evaluate anything at all. We assume information intensive campaigns are effective or we don't know and just hope/believe they are.

Community-based social marketing, founded and popularized by Doug McKenzie-Mohr Ph.D. – Environmental Psychologist, offers a campaign framework that uses a very different model. The framework stresses the importance of the social aspect of the behaviors we adopt and identifies and addresses the BARRIERS to engaging in a behavior.

Barriers are community and behavior specific. So, to change behaviors, and turn awareness into action, you have to be just as specific about the actions you want your audience to take and the barriers your audience might confront. Being specific will require you to do a bit of research to identify the true barriers and benefits (real and perceived) of the behavior change, and develop strategies to address the barriers using proven and effective tools.

Turning awareness into action
Moving your audiences from awareness to action requires us to research and identify the true barriers and benefits of the behavior change we are hoping for. Only then can you develop strategies using proven effective tools.

Steps in Community-based Social Marketing campaigns
The steps in community-based social marketing campaigns involve:

1. Selecting behaviors
2. Identifying barriers and benefits
3. Developing a strategy

4. Piloting a strategy and evaluating the pilot
5. Implementing the project more broadly

We'll go through these one at a time, and get into the details of each.

Selecting behaviors

When selecting behaviors you want to influence, choose behaviors that:

- Are specific and irreducible – "end-state" actions. What is your intended result? If your actions are too vague, you will struggle to identify barriers and communicate to your audience what they should do. Instead of asking people to "infiltrate at the source"; ask people to redirect their downspouts. Instead of "keeping water where it lands"; ask people to install a rain garden. Instead of reducing impervious surfaces; ask people to replace their concrete with permeable pavers. What is an end-state action? It is when someone actually INSTALLS their low flow showerheads. You don't want people to simply purchase the shower head. To make a difference it should be installed so water use is reduced.
- Make an impact. You want to be sure to site and size rain gardens correctly to collect flowing stormwater. Say you wanted to focus on residential energy savings. According to the US Energy Information Administration, heating accounts for the biggest portion of your utility bills, which means it accounts for the bulk of our energy use. To have a large impact from a few big actions, you could encourage people to take action to weatherize their homes. But large projects can be expensive and difficult for homeowners to implement. You could also have a large impact from a lot of smaller actions. If you focused on water heating, the second largest portion of our utility bill, and a lot more people participated you could have an even larger impact. Apparently wrapping water heaters in insulation blankets saves a lot of energy for little effort. Replacing an old water heater is cheaper and easier than installing insulation in most cases. The environmental impact is important and so is the action you choose. If everyone has already done it or the barriers are too large to overcome, are people likely to take the action?
- Increase the likelihood your audience will adopt the behavior. Is it worthwhile to host a rain garden workshop for apartment dwellers? Downspouts are relatively easy to move and the action is relevant to homeowners. Installing a rain garden is a lot of work and can be challenging. To increase the likelihood the project will be implemented, you must build in time to support your audience as they experience barriers to completing the action or risk that projects won't be implemented.
- Influence others. How many people are already engaged in this? If everyone is already doing it, you should focus on a different action. What is the opportunity for new adopters? Can you count on some community members to "follow the leader" and try it out? Consider how the change in normative behavior might influence others in the neighborhood.

Identifying barriers and benefits

When you identify barriers and benefits to adopting a behavior, consider these factors:

- Barriers:
    - What does your target audience find challenging about engaging in this behavior?
    - What stands in their way?
        - You may ask your audience to redirect their downspout to keep water from washing into the stormwater drains. But participants must have a proper location to redirect the spouts – if the surface grade is too high water may not infiltrate or if there is not an area to keep the water away from the foundation of the home then home owners may not want to risk a flooded basement. In addition, homeowners may lack the mechanical skills or confidence to redirect their downspout and would not take action without further support.
- Benefits:
    - What do they perceive to be the benefits of engaging in this behavior?
    - Are there multiple benefits that might make a change worthwhile?
- Don't assume: There are likely more barriers and benefits to these behaviors. It is human nature to make speculations about why people act in a certain way, but only by doing the appropriate research can we truly know what the barriers and benefits are. Any amount of research into the barriers your audiences experience and the benefits they derive from a specific behavior Is better than none:
    - Surveys
    - Focus groups
    - Observation
    - Research
    - Literature review

Learning Activity

Behaviors, Barriers and Benefits

Working in pairs, identify 1 or 2 specific actions you may want people to engage in as part of your community engagement project. If you cannot identify an action, choose an action from this list:

- Redirect downspouts to capture rain water from the roof
- Mow high and keep grass high to 3 inches to encourage root growth and water infiltration
- Clean the stormwater drain closest to your house to keep pollutants out of lakes and streams
- Install a cistern or rain barrel to collect rain water from the roof
- Install a rain garden to capture rain water before it runs off into the street
- Rake leaves to prevent excess nutrients from entering lakes and streams

One your own or with a partner, identify potential barriers to the actions you selected and then identify and describe how you would use the strategies we talked about to help your audience to overcome the barriers you identified.

All of the learning activities for this module should be entered into the CBSM Worksheet. You can download the worksheet from the Course Materials page. When you have completed the entire worksheet, and all the steps in designing a campaign, post your work on the appropriate forum for this topic, and this module, using the following format:

1. **Who is your target audience?**

2. **What do you want them to do/what behavior or action is your project focusing on?**
   Remember, behaviors should be specific and have direct environmental impact. You should also consider the probability of your audience adopting the behavior and how many of them are or are not already engaged in the behavior.

3. **Identify barriers and benefits**
   a) What are some of the potential barriers and benefits your audience may experience or perceive related to the behaviors you selected?
   b) How will you identify the actual barriers of your audience to be sure you are on the right track?

Developing strategies
Once you identify the action and associated barriers, you can identify strategies to overcome them. Let's look at some strategies that might be useful as you design your education and outreach campaign.

Communication
Communication can be an effective strategy – but you want to make sure you're addressing an information-gap barrier. Communicating information on its own without a call to action is not a strategy that engages people in action; it is simply communication.

It is critical in your communications that you know your audience. When you frame your communications:
   • Consider age, culture, values, interests
   • Provide experiential, hands-on learning
   • Incorporate leadership and service learning
   • Integrate personal or community goals
   • Provide feedback on the impact of actions

Communication, especially in the age of social media, can take one of two forms. Both can be effective, depending on what you hope to accomplish:

- **One-way**
    - Website
    - Email
    - Newsletter
    - Advertisement
    - Flyers
    - Media

- **Two-way**
    - Social media
    - Blog
    - Events
    - Activities
    - Discussions

Intentional conversations

The way you have conversations can help set people on the path to behavior change. You don't have to have all the answers in order to have effective, intentional conversations.

Why: Intentional conversations happen when you want to give people information, or help them problem solve.

When: Intentional conversations are most needed and effective when your audiences lack knowledge, or when you are trying to increase their motivation

Tips: Help people identify barriers and benefits.
Help people plan for how they will take action.
Speak to personal values.

Let people try an activity

When people don't have experience taking an action, letting them practice or try the behavior is a good way to help them overcome their lack of experience or their fears about the behavior. A good example is the bike racks on transit buses. At many spring and

summer outdoor events, you might notice that the bus company sets up a practice rack. People can try putting a practice bike on a practice rack. It creates a low-risk way to engage people in biking and using mass transit. That simple activity has helped boost bus ridership among people who bike for transportation by removing the barriers of knowledge and fear. If you expect homeowners to install rain gardens but they have never planted or weeded a garden, having them try the activity at a community planting event is a great first step in overcoming that barrier. Inviting them back to help weed may help them overcome their anxiety about identifying weeds correctly in their own rain garden.

Why: Engage people in activities when you are trying to help them build skills and knowledge or overcome fear and anxiety.

When: Trying an activity is effective is when you can help participants overcome anxiety that may prevent action. One opportunity to engage people in activities is around major life or "trigger" events – people are out of their normal routines and may be more open to trying something new. Other trigger points include moving, becoming parents, Earth Day and holidays.

Tips: Provide hands-on activities.
                Make it easy!
                Make it fun!

Make it easy to act
If it's not easy, people will be less likely to take action. This is often the reason that recyclables get thrown in the trash – facilities sometimes keep trash and recycling bins separate and most of the time people don't take initiative to find the recycling bins or don't realize that they are available so everything is tossed into the nearest bin. When Minneapolis switched to single-sort recycling, recycling rates jumped nearly 29 percent over the previous years, when all recyclables had to be sorted into separate containers. If you want people to "mow high" and adjust their mower blades, provide live training demonstrations or organize experienced block captains to help neighbors adjust their blades.

Why: People want and expect convenience.

When: Anytime external barriers are present

Tips: Decide if you can address the barrier.
                Find resources to make it easier to act.
                Give people the tools they need to take action.

Build commitment
Building commitment is a good strategy to help increase motivation and encourage new behaviors and social norms. In most cultures, written commitments are more effective than verbal commitments.

Public commitments are even more effective, examples include publishing the commitment in a newsletter, posting it to bulletin board, making a commitment while presenting to a group.

Group commitments are particularly effective when the group you are working with has good group cohesion, such as congregations, mosques and synagogues, neighborhood groups and classrooms. Gathering commitments at established events or meetings is more effective than trying to get commitments from people attending a one-time event or workshop. Having community leaders make commitments helps make the commitment "stickier."

One creative idea is taken from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. They had a campaign to reduce pet waste and held an event where the dogs dipped their paw in paint and "signed" a pledge card and the owner signed the pledge card as well. Participants were encouraged to put the signed pledge on their refrigerator as a reminder. Participants associated the pledge with a fun activity with their dog.

A neat idea from the Storm Drain Goalie campaign, a project of Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education, is to post commitments on social media using their "StormDrain Goalie" display as a backdrop with some fun props like rakes, brooms, hockey sticks and visuals for the different types of pollutants. Visit this link for more information about the campaign: https://www.facebook.com/StormDrainGoalie

Why:	Build consistency in self-perception. People want to act in the way they say they act.
When:	To enhance motivation
Tips:	Public, written or group commitments work well. People are more likely to take more advanced actions after making smaller commitments. Be creative in your approach.

Create social norms
Other people play an important role in our behavior. We are far more likely to take action if we see others taking action. Study after study asserts that we want to be accepted socially and that social norms have a significant impact in how we behave, even when it may not be in our best interest. If we are to protect water for the long-haul, we must develop and encourage a new set of social norms that supports sustainability.

Some groups have used strategies like these to encourage new social norms:

- Show commitments by putting up lawn signs or stickers on mailboxes for others to see
- Plan a street clean-up day in the fall and invite neighbors to participate
- Make hidden behaviors visible – post in the newsletter, blog or social media site the number of bags collected or a list of families who participated in leaf raking or street clean up event

Why: We want to be accepted by others.

When: When your audience doesn't believe it's important to act

Tips: Develop the expectation that "This is how we do things here."
                Utilize community leaders to encourage people to sign up, make and keep commitments.
                Ask existing leaders in a community who have social influence to model the behavior.

Use prompts

People sometimes forget to change their behavior. They may have reusable bags in their car but forget to grab them before they enter the store. They may intend to rake their leaves but then it snows and it's too late. They may forget that milk cartons are recyclable. Using prompts can help make new repetitive behaviors a habit. Water prompts are fairly common. You might have seen stickers that remind you to turn off water while brushing, only use your sprinkler on odd or even days.

Why: To create new habits.

When: Use prompts when it is likely people will forget to change a behavior that is purely a habit.

Tips: Make the prompt noticeable.
                Use visual reminders and cues.

Offer incentives

Incentives can be effective when action is unlikely unless motivation is significantly increased. Choose giveaways that help people overcome a barrier and take action. Groups have given away free cloth diaper kits to new moms help reduce disposable diaper waste, rain gauges so homeowners can hold off on watering after it rains and downspout redirection kits to move downspouts away from hard surfaces.

Why: To motivate action.

When:	Significantly increase motivation.

Tips:	Consider size and necessity
	Most effective with one-time behaviors
	Make sure your incentive is closely related to behavior you are trying to change

Encourage social diffusion
This is sometimes called the "Train the Trainer" model. The key is to identify and work with early adopters and community leaders and ask them to speak to others. Students in a Minneapolis school made two batches of non-toxic cleaners. Students were asked to give their extra cleaner to someone else and teach them about cleaners. They were required to provide feedback on what happened when they gave away the second cleaner to someone. Working with community leaders and early adopters enables you to spread influence through the rest of the group and community.

Why:	To continue building momentum.

When:	Use social diffusion when you think a group has a lack of knowledge.

Tips:	Identify and train leaders and early adopters.
	Ask leaders and early adopters to speak to others.

When do you use each of these strategies?
Each of these strategies can be effective, but we want to develop an understanding of which strategies are MOST effective at removing specific barriers. The chart below gives you some ideas on how to match the barrier you identify with the strategy that helps people get past that barrier.

Barrier	Strategy
Lack of motivation – value action	Commitment
Lack of motivation – don't value	Norms
Significant lack of motivation	Incentives
Forget to act	Prompts
Lack of information	Social diffusion Communication

Lack skills; anxiety	Let people try an activity
External barriers	Convenient

Pilot, evaluate and implement your project

Your Master Water Stewards community education and outreach campaign is the perfect opportunity to pilot and evaluate strategies to protect water. Engaging a smaller group to try out different strategies might be a good idea before you make major purchases and implement more broadly. Remember to evaluate outcomes instead of outputs to assess success. Outcomes include behavior changes – how many people took the desired action, resource use – the amount of water captured on a property and resource quality – measureable improvements in water quality, aquatic life and aquatic ecosystems.

Learning Activity

4. **Develop a strategy**

    Now, we want to think of ways you could use the following strategies to address the barriers for the behaviors you are targeting.

    Using the target audience, the behaviors and the barriers you identified in the previously, how might you use the following strategies in an outreach campaign?

    Choose strategies that will address the barriers for your audience; not all strategies will be applicable for all projects. **Post your thoughts in the Forum for this topic and this module.**

    Strategies:
    - Make it easy to act (infrastructure, tools, supplies, let people try an activity)
    - Get people to make a commitment
    - Change social norms
    - Encourage social diffusion
    - Use prompts and reminders
    - Communicate with your audience
    - Offer incentives

5. **Pilot, evaluate and implement your project**
    - What changes do you want your audience to make? What does success look like for your project?
    - How could you go about piloting a strategy with a segment of your target audience?
    - How will you evaluate success? *Remember, you should evaluate outcomes (behavior change, change in resource use, change in resource quality) not outputs.*