SELECTING MEDIA FOR

PROJECT SUPPORT COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

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INTRODUCTION

There are no hard and fast rules which pre-determine the
choice of media for a project support communication campaign.
On each occasion we must first examine the aims of the campaign,
the message we seek to convey, the target groups we intend to
reach and only then can we begin the task of selecting the media.
Each communication medium has its own characteristics.   Very
often there are several media that can do a particular job.   But
usually one medium will suggest itself as the most suitable channel
for communication.

It is not our intention to analyse the various media in
exhaustive detail.   Dr. Shawki Barghouti has prepared a very
concise summary of the most important communication media and
education techniques*.   But before we come to that I want to
pinpoint one or two pitfalls that await the unwary in selecting
media for project support communications campaigns.

*See also the very useful media selector chart designed by
John Balcomb in PSC Paper No. 24 - "Nutrition Education and
the Mass Media"

Media Selection is Secondary

So often when considering a project support communication campaign the choice of media predates the identification of the message, or the consideration of the needs and sensibilities of the target group. How often do we start with the idea that we want to make a film, prepare a slide set, put an article in a newspaper, and only then examine how the message can be adapted to our chosen media? The choice of media for the campaign should be determined by the identification of the people the campaign is addressing and the messages that are to be conveyed and not the other way round.

The Primacy of the Message - an example

After Eights, wafer thin mints coated in chocolate, are made in England, but the manufacturers, Rowntree Mackintosh, wanted to sell them not just in England but all over Europe. To promote sales they commissioned short television advertisements designed to promote the snobbish image of After Eight chocolates. How did they go about it? Some examples of these T.V. campaigns in four west European countries are given on the next page.

Let us consider this campaign for a moment. The company has a very clear objective; to sell more chocolates. The method was to push the product's luxury image and invest After Eight with a sophisticated and snobbish appeal. I want to draw to your attention the skilful way the message was adapted to local situations. Although the aim of the advertisements is always to promote the high class image of After Eight, the advertising campaign was very sensitive to national characteristics. In Germany the campaign exploited humourously the German image of the English upper classes abroad. In Holland there was no mention of England at all, and the emphasis was on expensive sophistication. In France there was a direct appeal to the snob value of "les choses anglaises". In Italy there was a combination of the approach used in Holland and France; the emphasis was on sophisticated party givers with the reinforcing mention that After Eight were the latest thing from London.

After Eight in Europe

Four examples of how Rowntree Mackintosh promoted After Eight chocolates in television spots in Germany, Holland, France and Italy:

Germany

Lady: Ah, Hubert, has the consul once more brought some After Eight from London?

Butler: No madam, we are now in the fortunate position of being able to obtain After Eight in Germany.

Lady: Oh really!

Voice over: After Eight - extremely thin peppermint leaves.

Holland

Voice over (woman): An evening with your best friends. A fine dinner, French wine and then a chat with After Eight and coffee, lots of coffee and After Eight, soft peppermint in silver-thin chocolate.

Voice over (man): After Eight, wafer-thin mints.

France

Voice over: The English have always had a certain way of life - a sense of refinement if you like .... Here is a new fashion from London for after dinner - After Eight. Fine leaves of chocolate filled with melting mint.

Yes, you heard - mint chocolate. And don't say, "They are mad, these English" before having tasted After Eight.

Italy

Female voice: What did you say?
Ah yes, yes ....
It was a very chic party, poor Vanessa ....
Just think, the After Eight soon went ....
Ah yes, the After Eight. However it was a very good party.

Voice over: After Eight - chocolate leaves of creamy mint. After Eight - the latest thing from London for welcoming friends.

My aim in describing this campaign is <u>not</u> to hold
advertising up as a model for Project Support Communication
campaigns, for I think that generally, advertising techniques
are grossly inappropriate models for PSC work.   My intention
is to draw attention to the sensitivity of Rowntree Mackintosh
to the characteristics of its target groups, as a way of
emphasizing that

> BEFORE SELECTING THE MEDIA FOR A COMMUNICATION
>
> SUPPORT CAMPAIGN, THE AIMS OF THE CAMPAIGN SHOULD
>
> BE CLEARLY DEFINED AND THE MESSAGE CLOSELY
>
> ADAPTED TO THE CHARACTERISTICS AND THE
>
> SENSIBILITIES OF THE VARIOUS TARGET GROUPS

Another example

Another example of adapting the message very closely to the
various target groups is the catalogue of visual aids for child
care and nutrition education prepared by the Communication Centre
of the Ethiopian Nutrition Institute*.   The catalogue does not
merely list and describe the aids.   Each aid has a target group
e.g. teachers, urban literates, rural illiterates, mothers,
school children, etc.   The various messages are carefully adapted
to each group bearing in mind their abilities and sensibilities.
We do not know how effective these aids have been, but we can say
that they at least started out on the right foot - the various
messages and aids have been carefully targetted.

* Available from: E.N.I. Communication Centre,
                    P.O. Box 2361,
                    Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mass Media and Personal Communication

Modern communication aids have an important role to play in any development project because often they allow us to convey information, more clearly, and more cheaply, to larger numbers of people than we could reach through personal contact.   For example, a minister cannot go everywhere in the country explaining a new development project.   Even if all his assistants go round the country explaining the project, the cost in time and money is sure to be disproportionate to the results.   By using films, slide sets, pamphlets, newspaper articles and radio, in addition to a few selected public meetings, the minister can get. a much-wider coverage for his new project, and still have time to carry out his many other tasks.   Another advantage of mass media is that they enable the government to standardise the information being disseminated.

When we use mass media in our communication campaigns because they are more cost effective than personal contact, we must be aware of the limitations of mass media.   As a general rule one can say that mass media are usually more effective in transmitting information or initial knowledge, while inter-personal channels are more effective in inducing attitudinal or behavioural changes.   The table below gives a brief outline of the differences between mass and interpersonal media.   It is meant to be suggestive rather than definitive.   One could certainly pinpoint other differences.

Some Differences between Mass and Interpersonal Media

MASS	INTERPERSONAL
Fast (rapid rate of distribution of message)	Slow (tedious rate of distribution of message)
Accurate (all receivers receive same message)	Inaccurate (mouth-to-mouth distortion of message)
Creates awareness, reinforces existing behaviours	Induces behaviour change
One-way communication (feedback difficult)	Two-way communication (feedback easy)
Can be "turned off" easily	Difficult to turn off
Cheap per capita	Expensive per capita
Cannot be easily directed to specific audience	Can be selective
Cannot tune to needs of individual receivers	Can tune to needs of individual receivers
Allows use of well-trained communicators and many resources per message	Relies on many less well-trained communicators and few resources per message

Avoid Rigid Schema of Media Applicability

It is very easy to select the media for our campaigns according to rigid schema instead of considering each situation individually. Because it is generally true, for example, that newspapers reach the educated elite, films create impact among the 'masses', slide sets are suitable for small groups of influential officials, and posters back up the other media, then it is very easy to fall into the trap of assuming that these are the only uses for these media. It is the mechanical application of equipment and planning guidelines that have been the death-knell of so many development projects. A similarly mechanical application of communication support techniques will also be fatal.

Avoid the "Buckshot Approach"

Another common pitfall in selecting media for project support communication campaigns, is what we may call the "Buckshot Approach". Under this system we dodge the difficult task of selecting the most suitable media to serve our campaign by proposing that the message be relayed through all the media at a country's disposal. Under this system we use every possible communication medium we can think of, on the grounds that in this way we cannot fail to get our message across to someone. How far this is true, or if true, necessary, and whether the expenditure of money and energy on preparing the various materials bears any relationship to their relative importance in the context of each project is not considered. Just because we can use several media in a project support communication campaign, that is no reason why we should.

The Importance of Timing

The choice of the ideal medium for delivering a message must always be tempered by the importance of delivering the message on time. In one development project the best medium for communicating a message may well be a film. But a film may take a year to produce, and if the information must be communicated within the next three months, then there is no point in choosing a film to deliver your message.

You will have to make do with aids that we can prepare within the time span available to us.

Selecting Media Involves a Choice of Priorities

Because human, financial and material resources for a communication campaign are inevitably limited, the selection of media for a communication campaign necessarily involves a choice of priorities. This means not just a technical choice of the media that can be afforded, that will be effective in reaching the chosen target groups and that can deliver the message on time, but it also involves a consideration of the various groups that will be involved in any development project. Frequently we do not have time to make separate approaches to each and every identifiable group. We must sometimes make do with the best practicable strategy rather than the ideal campaign. We must, therefore, evaluate which groups are the most important and concentrate our activities on those.

Greg Lanning
April, 1974

SUMMARY CHART OF COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION TECHNIQUES

Reproduced with permission of Dr. Shawki Barghouti from "Reaching Rural Families" - An FAO Publication

Method	Main Advantages	Main Disadvantages	Comments
1. Public Meetings and Lectures	Easy to arrange. Reach many people. Can have more than one speaker. Create public interest and awareness. Stimulate follow-up discussion.	Audience is usually passive. Speakers may not understand audience's needs. Difficult to assess success. Audience might not learn the main points.	Handouts should be used. Presentation should be clear. Use visual aids when possible. Audience should be encouraged to raise questions and to participate. Speaker should establish two-way communication.
2. Group Discussions	Build group conscious-ness. Individual members of the group can understand where each member stands in regard to the discussed issue: provide chances for exchanging opinions and increase tolerance and understanding.	Some members may dominate. Sometimes difficult to control or to keep focusing on the main issue.	Should be used with an interested audience to discuss a definite pro-blem. Procedure should be flexible and informal. Summary of discussion should be presented at the end of discussion. Decision should be made by group members regarding its stand on the issue discussed. Requires the selection of good chairman.

Method	Main Advantages	Main Disadvantages	Comments
3. Role Playing	Facts and opinion can be presented from different viewpoints especially in controversial issues. Can encourage people to re-evaluate their stand on issues and can invite audience participation. Deepens group insight into personal relations.	Cannot be used in community meetings. Some role-players may feel upset by playing a role they do not agree with. Requires careful preparation for the selection of the issue and actors. Careful preparation is essential.	Can only be used in training courses. Follow-up discussions should focus on the issue rather than on actors' performances. Source material about the issue should be provided to the actors to prepare their arguments.
4. Drama	Groups can be active "learning by doing". Can attract attention and stimulate thinking if situations are effectively dramatized.	Actors require attention in training and preparing script. Preparations might be too difficult for the field worker. Difficult to organize because it requires considerable skills and careful guidance by the field worker.	Should be restricted to one issue. Can only be used during training courses. Can be used as entertainment if well prepared before a public meeting.
5. Case Study	Can illustrate a situation where audience can provide suggestions. Can elicit local initiative if the case corresponds to local problems.	Difficult to organize. Rewording of events and personalities might reduce the effectiveness of the case. Some audiences may not identify themselves with the case.	Should be clearly prepared. Can be used in training course. Questions and discussions should lead to recommendations for audience action. Audience should be encouraged to prepare case studies relevant to its experience.

Method	Main Advantages	Main Disadvantages	Comments
6. Home Visit	Establish good personal relationships between field workers and families. Can provide information about rural families that cannot be collected otherwise. Encourage families to participate in public functions, demonstrations and group work.	Field worker cannot visit every family in the community. Only families in accessible localities can be visited.	Records should be kept for families visited. Schedule of home visits should be developed to assure allocation of time for field work activities. Handouts should be given to the families visited.
7. Demonstration	Participants can be active and learn by doing. Convinces the audience that things can easily be done. Establishes confidence in field worker's ability.	Requires preparation and careful selection of demonstration topic and place. Outside factors can affect demonstration results and consequently might affect confidence in field worker.	Demonstration processes should be rehearsed in advance. Audience should participate in the doing. Educational materials should be distributed to the participants at the end of the demonstration. Time and place of demonstration should be suitable for people to attend.
8. Radio, newspapers and television	Radio can be used to teach illiterates and literates. Newspapers can provide information within a short time for those who can read. Mass media can create awareness of issues and announce activities in this regard.	No visual aids can be used on radio. They can be used in newspapers and television. Media programmes are always short. Regular mass media programmes are one-way communication. Difficult to assess effects. Programmes are usually prepared for national audience which reduces their relevance to local problems.	Mass media programmes should be relevant to the problems of the local people. They are better utilized if combined with group discussion.

Method	Main Advantages	Main Disadvantages	Comments
9. Mass media group listening	Combines mass media and personal channels. Can be preapred and used for many audiences over a period of time. Encourages group participation.	Requires preparation for recruiting groups, training group leaders, and preparation of educational material. Can be expensive.	Should be regularly held. Participants should be provided with educational material. Can be effective in enforcing literacy and adult education. Programme selected should be about local problems. Tape recorders can be used. They are flexible. Can be used to tape role-playing, group discussion and interviews with local personalities.
10. Blackboard	A flexible tool. Easy to make and to use. Can be very attractive if used properly. Use of coloured chalks can add to its visual appeal. Can be portable.	Requires some manipulation skill (though quickly acquired). Requires teaching skills to make best use.	Should be essential in every group. Very useful for schematic summaries or talk or discussion. Audience can participate. Small blackboards can be portable. Writing should be clear and organized.
11. Flannelboard	Can be portable and mobile. Can be prepared by experts in advance: little skill required in actual operation. Could be used to make presentation more dynamic.	Can only be used for what is prepared. Cannot adapt to changing interest of group. More elaborate equipment than ordinary blackboard. Difficult to keep up-to-date.	Very useful but only for the prepared talks. Audience can participate. It should be used step-by-step. Flannel materials should be stored properly for future use. Flannel-graphs should be numbered according to their order in the presentation.

Method	Main Advantages	Main Disadvantages	Comments
12. Bulletin Board	Striking, graphic, informative, flexible, replaces local newspapers. Keeps community up-to-date with information.	Requires preparation and attention to community needs.	Should be combined with maps, talks and photographs. Very suitable for posting articles, announcements and news of development in the community.
13. Flip charts (turnover charts)	Cheap and simple. Can be stopped at will for analysis. Can be prepared locally. Ideas could be illustrated in sequence. Illustrations on flip chart could be used many times for different audiences in different sessions.	Soon torn. Can only be seen by a few at a time. Can be difficult to illustrate complicated ideas.	Should not be overlooked for illustration of simple sequences - especially with small groups. Lectures should be prepared in advance for use on several occasions.
14. Films	Because of sight and sound can attract audience's attention. Can make great emotional appeal to large audiences.	Good films are rare. Equipment costly to buy and maintain. One-way communication unless properly used. Requires skill in running film projectors.	Best if combine with discussion groups. Much work to be done regarding getting good films made. Attention should be given in getting audience to evaluate the film. Films should be used for stimulating discussion rather than for teaching alone.
15. Filmstrips	Much cheaper and easier to work than films. Easily made from local photographs. Encourage discussion.	Usually sight only. Not so dramatic as motion pictures. Could be expensive.	Can have recorded commentary. Strip can be cut up and individual pictures mounted as 2" slides; then can be selected and re-arranged.

Method	Main Advantages	Main Disadvantages	Comments
16. Slides	Have all the advantages of film strips plus more flexibility and can be more topical. They can be used in a series to illustrate a concept.	Could be expensive. Difficult to have them on all subjects of teaching.	They should be used after careful preparation of logical sequence and a good commentary.
17. Models, exhibitions and displays	Appeal to several senses. Can be used in various occasions and situations. Can illustrate ideas in detail.	Not many workers can build them or use them properly.	Useful models and exhibitions could be built up locally. Should be used in familiar places - centres.
18. Maps, charts, diagrams.	Visual appeal. Should simplify details. Permit leisurely study: Can develop sequence on display boards.	May mislead by over-simplicity. Create transport and storage problems.	Should be made especially for groups. May need careful explanation at first. Could be used as summary of information. Symbols and layout should be familiar to the audience.

CF-RAI-USAA-PD-GEN-2007-000188

Expanded Number **CF-RAI-USAA-PD-GEN-2007-000188**

External ID

Title

"Selecting Media for Project Support Communication Campaigns" distributed at the UNICEF/PSC Workshop on Communication for Social Development, held at the University of Zambia, Lusaka, 29 April to 10 May 1974

| *Date Created / From Date* | *Date Registered* | *Date Closed / To Date* |
| **4/1/1974** | **6/20/2007 at 12:14 PM** | |

Primary Contact

Home Location **CF/RAF/ZW/A118_-1987-000016913 (In Container)**

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Itm Fd01: In, Out, Internal Rec or Rec Copy

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Current Location/Assignee **Upasana Young since 8/26/2007 at 6:51 PM**

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FI3: Record Copy? **No**

Record Type **A01 PD-GEN ITEM**

Contained Records

Container **CF/RA/BX/PD/RP/LB/1987/T005: Africa: Social welfare, Nutrition, Sa**

| *Fd3: Doc Type - Format* | *Da1:Date First Published* | *Priority* |
| **6/22/2007 at 12:05 PM** | | |

Document Details **Record has no document attached.**

Notes

PSC paper No 17, by Greg Lanning, Assistant PSC Officer, UNICEF, Nairobi, and Dr. Shawki Barghouti, PBFL, FAO, Nairobi.
Discussed during Part III of the workshop, "Media in PSC campaigns".

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