EVALUATION: "Did It Work?
How To Measure Communications Success"

Determining if a communications campaign was successful requires defining, up front, what success looks like. In other words, every communications plan should have clearly defined and measurable communications objectives in support of overall goals of the plan. Too often, an organization sets vague objectives or lists objectives not tied to specific communications tactics. Consequently, the organization is unable to determine whether its communications strategies were on target or its communications tactics have directly achieved anything.

Well-stated, specified objectives almost always include some form of statistical or quantifiable factor. If a benchmark statistic for that factor already exists, then the measureable communications objective should note what amount of change your plan aims to achieve over a specified time.

Different indicators of progress in changing perceptions or behaviors could include: awareness, knowledge, understanding, preference, attitude, opinion, and behavioral change. Obviously, in impaired driving prevention and occupant protection, there are some very specific tools and measurements we use—seat belt observational studies, ticket and arrest information, and ultimately, crash and fatality data—to help us assess and evaluate the success of our overall **programs**. But for **communications** efforts, we also should monitor, evaluate and assess communications performance. Examples include measuring media by what percentage of a target audience was reached and with what frequency; estimating the total audience at a partner-sponsored event; measuring the column inches of earned media; conducting surveys to assess changes in awareness levels; holding focus groups to learn about changes in perceptions; and much more, depending on the objectives.

How Do We Know What's Working?

1. **Commonly used research techniques for these types of measurement:**
   - Telephone surveys
   - Mail surveys
   - E-mail surveys

2. **Example measures:**
   - Unaided message recall
   - "Heard or saw the ad"
   - "Believed more enforcement was taking place"
   - "Started wearing my seatbelt at night"

EVALUATION

3. **When to Evaluate**
    - Is it an on-going, but relatively "quiet" program without high-profile, high-visibility elements?
    - Is it a short-term and intense program, such as mobilization or crackdown?
    - Is it a slightly longer program, but during a fixed period of time, such as summertime travel?

    Programs that are ongolng…
    These types of programs can be assessed meaningfully during intervals that range from once a quarter to once a year.
    - Tracking studies - monitor change and progress over time
    - Very consistent in the measurement and research variables and techniques
    - Valid comparisons can be made from one time period to the next

    Programs during a fixed period of time…
    With defined starting and ending times, assessment has two key stages:
    - Establishing statistical benchmark measures before program
    - Measuring results immediately upon program conclusion
    - In certain cases, subsequent tracking measures may be needed

4. How do I get this done?
Unless your measurement needs are relatively simple, enlist professional assistance. Seek out a marketing research specialist within your department, from another department, or from an outside firm.
- Greatly enhances the usefulness, statistical analyses and overall credibility of the research.
- Saves you a significant amount of time.
- Provides useful advice that will improve the outcome of your study.

Recruit partners to help with manpower. For instance, groups like MADD might be willing to provide manpower for DMV surveys; college/university professors might assist with student manpower in order to provide students "real world" experience.

5. Putting Your Evaluation to Work
How specific findings can be put to work:
- Refining your creative approach
- Refining your primary messages
- Refining your media buy
- Adding, refining or deleting entire components
- Reallocating expenditures
- Demonstrating campaign effectiveness (and rationale to support continuance)