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Introduction

A year-round communications plan with a series of coordinated messages in support of the major mobilizations and crackdowns and other key highway safety opportunities is the best way to maximize communication results, achieve long-term behavioral change and conserve critical resources.

In the case of highway safety, greater results are achieved through year-round communications programs. Awareness levels for your messages among your target audiences are sustained at higher levels when those messages are coordinated and integrated throughout the year. This continual reinforcement helps create positive behavioral change.

There are several inherent weaknesses in programs that rely solely on messaging presented only during mobilizations and crackdowns.

1. Awareness levels decline soon after the mobilizations and crackdowns because there is no sustaining messaging program or strategy. As a result, positive behavioral change by the target audience often is short-lived. Consumers who were exposed to messages during mobilizations and adopted the desired behavior may soon revert to old habits.
2. Building a year-round communications strategy, anchored by national mobilizations and crackdowns, encourages states to identify other times of the year when it is important to get the message out.

As states move toward a sustained year-round enforcement effort, they can run more limited paid advertising campaigns throughout the year, and promote community awareness that law enforcement agencies take highway safety seriously and are enforcing laws beyond the national mobilization. The National Mobilization and Crackdown media blitz should be used to your advantage to punctuate individual efforts throughout the year. Developing relationships with your local media to sustain the message is key.

Key Questions to Consider

To make this session more relevant to your needs, consider the following key questions:

- What is strategic communications planning, and how does it apply to your organization?
 - What are the five steps of strategic planning, and how is each step completed in your organization?
 - When conducting your strategic assessment, what data are you analyzing beyond your own state's fatality data?
 - What has made it difficult for you to collect information about the target audiences in your state?
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- What specific state and community opportunities can you build on to advance safety belt and impaired driving issues during the “dark days” of the year?
- How can the national plan position issues so you can better leverage the information?
- Does your state have a proactive strategic communications plan? If not, what prevents you from having one?

WHY INTEGRATE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS?

Introduction

Because the public encounters a daily blitz of commercial messages and appeals, integrated marketing communications offer the most effective way for consumers to acquire, process and cope with new information. Integrated marketing communications deliver a single message through multiple communication channels, offering marketers a way to overcome commercial clutter and present a message that is noticed, remembered, and—hopefully—acted upon.

In the case of highway safety, it allows drivers and passengers to quickly identify and evaluate the relevance of such brands as “Click It or Ticket” and *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over*. When delivered through multiple media, there is a much greater likelihood that the messages will break through the clutter and be internalized.

The marketer who does not use integrated marketing communications as a way to build awareness and brand meaning for consumers and the public often will be ignored or misunderstood. An integrated approach builds brand awareness and produces the desired behavioral change faster and more cost-effectively than any other approach. It is a way to increase marketing effectiveness while conserving critical resources.

Issues

Breaking Through the Clutter — The Difference Between an Advertising Program and an Integrated Program

Advertising is only one part of the communication mix. Marketing programs that rely solely on advertising provide fewer results per dollar spent than fully integrated programs using a communication mix of earned media, advertising, special events and sponsorships.

Proactive Integrated Planning versus Reactive Piecemeal Programs

Marketers who take a holistic, integrated, year-round approach to planning produce greater results than those who use isolated paid-advertising programs based on short-term opportunities or special “offers of the day” from the media. Long-term strategy always outproduces short-term paid-advertising programs.

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Sustaining Awareness Between Mobilizations and Crackdowns

Although mobilizations and crackdowns are highly effective in increasing public awareness and changing public behavior, an integrated, year-round communications plan full of PR activities can help prevent a significant drop-off in awareness after the major mobilizations and crackdowns are complete.

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AS PART OF THE BIGGER PICTURE

Introduction

A good integrated marketing communications program includes a clear and coordinated set of core messages that carry a cohesive and integrated theme through all forms of communication. These forms include earned media/publicity, public service announcements (PSAs), paid advertising, the Internet, sponsored events, promotional materials, etc.

While recognizing that these marketing techniques collectively represent only one facet of the multifaceted program needed to create real behavioral change in our target audiences on important highway safety issues (i.e., enforcement, adjudication, training and treatment, etc.), it's important to look at these communication techniques in greater depth to maximize their use and effectiveness.

Definitions

The following tools are a means for highway safety marketers to carry out an integrated communications program based on a comprehensive year-round plan.

Communications Goals

- What you hope to accomplish.
- The long-range end result after two-five years.

Communications Objectives

- Directly related to the goals.
- Specific targets of an effort or initiative.
- Measurable and achievable with a given time period.

Communications Strategies

- Approaches you will take to meet your objective.
 - A general description of your approach to each target audience to best effect behavioral change.
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Communications Tactics

- Specific activities you will do to bring each communications strategy to life.

Paid Advertising

Advertising is a paid, mass-mediated attempt to persuade. If communication is not paid for, it is not advertising. For example, a form of promotion called “public service announcements” or “earned media” is not paid for. Advertising is disseminated through familiar means—television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, direct mail and billboards. The advantage of advertising over earned media is that the timing and content of the advertising messages can be carefully controlled and target audiences can be reached more precisely.

Public Service Announcements

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are not advertising. True, they look like ads and sound like ads, but they aren't ads. They are offered by cable TV, broadcast stations and print outlets on a nonpaid basis as information in the public interest. Simply put, PSAs are excluded from the definition of advertising because they are unpaid communication and are not “placed.” That means that the timing for running the PSAs and the number that run cannot be controlled. Marketing campaigns that rely solely on PSAs, without paid advertising and other forms of communication, rarely achieve awareness levels sufficient to create adequate public awareness and behavioral change.

Non-Commercial Sustaining Announcements

Non-Commercial Sustaining Announcements, or NCSAs, are: (1) sponsored by a nontraditional advertiser whose resources are not sufficient to ensure the placement and frequency of a normal commercial buy but whose unique coverage needs can't be met by the normal PSA placement, and (2) broadcast using airtime donated by stations through the NCSA program of State broadcasters' associations.

Basically, stations guarantee airplay in all dayparts and provide a notarized affidavit of performance. You pay for it, but the NCSA program is designated by the FCC. Note that the time your PSA airs is completely up to the station. You may get some good dayparts, but you can't control placement.

Public Relations

Public relations describes the way issues and messages are communicated between an organization and the public. It is typically the discipline that looks after an organization's reputation. Through a planned and sustained set of activities, including events, sponsorships, and earned media, the PR program aims to win understanding and support, and influence the opinions and behaviors of the organization's key audiences.

Earned Media

Earned media or publicity is an important component of public relations. It is unpaid-for media exposure of events, issues, personalities and other news. The major advantage of earned media—when the coverage is

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good—is that it tends to carry heightened credibility with the consumer. It also provides important information to policy- and decision-makers. A major disadvantage is that unlike with advertising, the content cannot be easily controlled, and there is no guarantee the message will get delivered as intended, when intended, to the intended audience.

Sponsorship of Events

Events, whether paid or unpaid, are sponsored for the purpose of the positive transfer of image from the event to the brand. Events can be single-sponsored, in which all of the transfer of image accrues to one sponsor, or co-sponsored, which spreads the cost among several co-sponsoring entities.

To the extent the event is part of an integrated plan and the image of the event is viewed positively by the target audience, there is a higher likelihood that the event will help create tangible results in increasing awareness.

Collateral/Promotional Materials

Most integrated marketing communications campaigns also require some form of high-visibility materials (brochures, trade show booths, posters, etc.) aimed at educating, publicizing, and winning support for communications objectives. Collateral and promotional materials create an important additional opportunity to increase exposure to a core message or series of messages that are integral to the overall campaign. Promotional materials such as brochures allow the integrated marketer to communicate information and facts that are too lengthy to communicate through paid advertising and give the marketer a tool with which to respond to partners, the public and the media when additional information is requested.

Communication Mix

The communication mix is the percentage of resources allocated to each form of communication, such as advertising, PSAs, earned media, sponsored events, materials, etc. Using all of these communications tools within an integrated plan allows highway safety marketers to develop effective year-round communications programs. These programs are part of a multifaceted marketing program involving prevention, enforcement, adjudication, training and treatment.

Questions Critical to the Planning Process

- What is your budget? How many resources in terms of time, people and dollars can you allocate to accomplish your desired impaired driving and occupant protection communications program objectives?
 - Who is your target audience?
 - What is your objective and goal (i.e., social norming, behavior modification, or public awareness)?
 - Based on the target audience, objective and goal, which media vehicles are most appropriate to use?
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- Is your plan integrated (i.e., paid advertising, PSAs, earned media, event sponsorship, promotional materials, electronic/new media, etc.)?
 - Does your plan result in a year-round program?
 - How will you measure the results?
 - Are there potential partners or sponsorships that can help extend your limited resources?
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