



## Tell Your Story Well: Merging Evaluation and Communication for Sustainability

State/Tribal/Adolescents at Risk  
Suicide Prevention Grantees  
Technical Assistance Meeting  
January 4–6, 2009  
Phoenix, Arizona

### Session Objectives

- Review core concepts of communication to get into a “marketing mindset.”
- Understand how communication and evaluation can align to support sustainability.
- Learn how to tell your initiative’s story in ways that compel audience support.



## What Is Sustainability?

- Is the benchmark for your success.
- Can mean sustaining existing programs and services, but...
- For most successful initiatives, means shifting focus from sustaining **programs** to sustaining **functions**.
  - Doesn't matter who is providing services, as long as they're still being provided!
  - May mean making tough choices—not everything can be sustained!



## Shifting Focus to Sustainability

- Starts with creating a basic plan for sustainability.
  - What do you and your partners want to sustain or believe can be sustained?
  - What functions in your plan are already covered?
  - Where are there gaps in your plan?



## First: Deepen Existing Partnerships

- Invite partner feedback on the initiative's progress and their role in it.
- Invite meaningful participation in strategic planning efforts.
- Acknowledge partner support publicly.
- How do you and your partners perceive their roles shifting as the initiative moves towards sustainability?



## Who Still Needs To Be at the Table?

- Develop new partners for sustainability
  - Who else needs to be at the table to sustain key functions of your initiative?
  - What are your common goals, mission?
  - How would partnership with your initiative be of benefit *to them*?



## It's All About THEM!

- Your intended audiences are always at the forefront of your communication.
  - Learn as much as possible about an audience *before* creating materials and messaging.
  - Create messaging and materials that matter *to them*.
  - Respect and respond to *their* needs, values, and beliefs.
  - Craft messages based on *what they are able to hear*—not necessarily what you think they *should* hear.



## The Typical Approach

- “Experts” tell us what to do because “they know what’s best.”
- Those same experts are baffled when we:
  - Don’t support their programs.
  - Throw away their brochures.
  - Ignore their advice.
- Asking, “What’s *WRONG* with *THEM*?!”



## A Better Approach: The Marketing Mindset

- What's wrong with our "product"?
- Is our message off the mark?
- Do the benefits offset the costs?
- Does our product/service align with our audiences' beliefs, values, goals?

It's not about *us*.  
It's about *them*.



## Exchange Theory

*What are you  
going to give me?*



*Does this solve a  
problem for me?*

*What will I have  
to give up in  
order to get it?*

*Is it worth the  
effort to me?*



## A Communication Strategy Can Help

- Reach those audiences who can step in to help fill gaps in your sustainability plan.
  - Is different from those audiences who use your services.
- Improve the likelihood of “getting to yes” with partners, supporters.

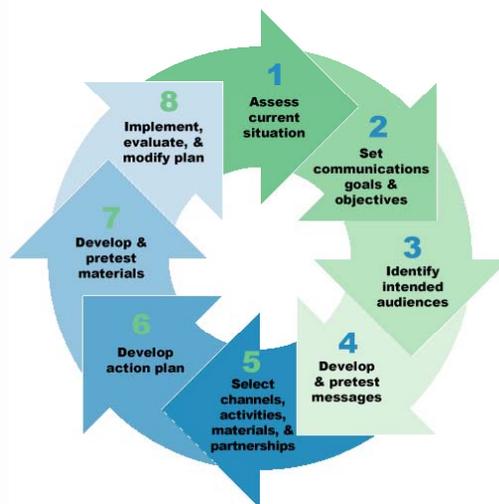


## Plan Your Communication Strategy

- Working with partners to create a communication strategy can:
  - Provide a strategic “road map” to keep you on task.
  - Support your plans for sustainability.
  - Provide the most bang for your limited time/money.
  - Increase buy-in and commitment from partners.



## Create a Communication Plan for Sustainability



## Communication + Data/Outcomes = SUSTAINABILITY

- Compelling presentation of outcomes is key to sustainability.
  - Requires meeting your audiences “where they are.”
  - Is more than facts—it’s memorable!
- Evaluation collects and assesses information; communication frames and presents it.

Let’s look at the difference between the “evaluation mindset” and the “marketing mindset.”



## Evaluators Are From Mars



Show me the numbers. ←

Deep appreciation for absolutes; risk-averse. ←

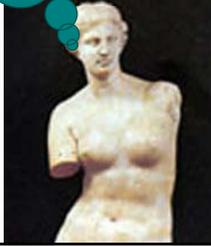
No fear of lengthy, complex, and analytical reports and abstracts. ←

Process-oriented. The journey may be more important than the goal.

Time takes time—and that's what accurate evaluations need.



## Communicators Are From Venus



It's all about the audience.

Generalities are okay; don't mind taking a risk.

Want to see data communicated simply and easily. No jargon, please!

Love to talk about successes and challenges.

Goal oriented: Can we see RESULTS?



## Can Mars and Venus Align?



What's the story with us?  
We need to TALK...

- Start working together early; communicate regularly; value each others' contributions.
- Monitor and share key information to refine:
  - Data collection
  - Communication

TALK? There's nothing to talk about—not until I can look at those survey results...



## Mars and Venus Collaborate

- What types of data do you have right now?
- Does your data come from quality sources?
- What message/story does the data convey?



## Mars and Venus Learn To Listen

- Solicit input from partners, stakeholders. Listen to their desired outcomes. For example:
  - School principals are interested in risk reduction and increased test scores.
  - School counselors want to improve student functioning.
  - School district wants better attendance to garner more State/Federal money.



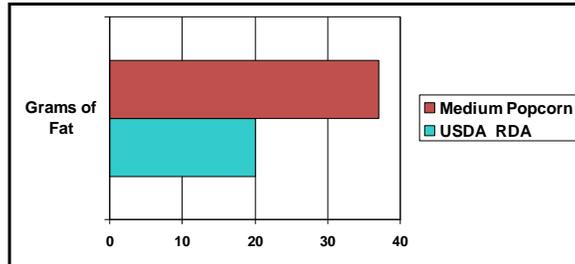
## Mars and Venus Order a Medium Popcorn at the Movies

- DATA report:
  - The average “medium” popcorn contains 37 grams of saturated fat.
  - USDA recommends no more than 20 grams per day of saturated fat.
- The COMMUNICATION challenge:
  - Reduce consumption of movie theater popcorn.

Fairly dry statistics! Is there another way?



# Mars and Venus Order a Medium Popcorn at the Movies



A bar chart for the AGES!

It's good, but mind if I try something else?



From the Center for Science in the Public Interest

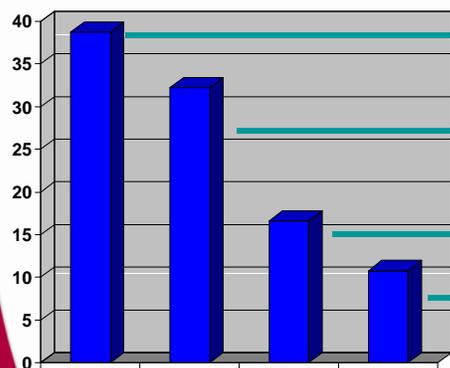
## Data Supports Program Goals

- **The programmatic goal:**
  - Increase number of children receiving mental health services.
- **The communication goal:**
  - Improve buy-in from teachers, school staff for mental health referral process.
- **The data\*:**
  - 38.7% of students don't feel an adult cares about them.
  - 32.3% report experiencing hopelessness.
  - 16.6% have seriously considered suicide.
  - 10.8% have attempted suicide (double State average).



\*As reported in latest district survey, students ages 11–17

## Sharing the Data: One Way To Go



38.7% don't believe an adult at school cares about them.

32.3% experience hopelessness.

16.6% have seriously considered suicide.

10.8% district youth aged 10–17 have attempted suicide.



## Students and Depression

Ages 11–17

One-third experience hopelessness.

One in six seriously consider suicide.

One in ten have attempted suicide at **double** the State rate.



And more than one-third don't believe that any of us care.

## Evaluation and Communication

1. What are we trying to accomplish?
  - What are our communication goals?
  - Why are we collecting this particular data?
2. Who are our intended audiences?
3. **What do they need to know?**
4. How are we going to tell them?

## What Are We Trying To Accomplish?

- Potential communication goals:  
(Why this particular data?)
  - Drive program decisions during grant period.
  - Show value of program to community partners to garner support for sustainability.
  - Convince superintendent to reallocate funds to continue teacher training programs.
  - Determine how program implementation impacts results.
  - Convince teachers to add yet another thing into their already packed schedules.
  - Show amazing success of your initiative to your GPO.



## Who Are Our Intended Audiences?

- What types of partners do we need to reach?
- What do we know about them?
- How will we learn more about them?



## Who Are Our Intended Audiences?

- Consider the possible sectors:
  - Statewide Suicide Prevention Coalitions
  - Policymakers: local to national level
  - Community leaders/opinion makers
  - Business leaders
  - Nonprofit and foundation leaders
  - Faith-based community
  - School districts and more...



## Intended Audience Brainstorm

- Who are we missing?
- Are all relevant sectors represented?
- Who might help us identify additional partners?



## Let's Prioritize

- Who is our most important potential partner for the identified goal?
- Using this group, what do we know about them?
- What partners are a priority?



## Evaluation and Communication

1. What are we trying to accomplish?
2. Who are our intended audiences?
- 3. What do they need to know?**
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## What Do the Audiences Need/Want To Know?

- *Audience input is essential...*
    - What's their definition of success?
    - What are their priorities?
    - What are they interested in?
    - What information do they trust?
    - What level of technical detail do they demand?
    - What data do you need to tell your story?
    - How do they currently receive information?
- ...Audience input is essential.*



## Exercise

- Break into small groups based on selected audience.
- Do a quick analysis of your audience.
  - What do we know about them?
  - How will we learn more?



## Evaluation and Communication

1. What are we trying to accomplish?
2. Who are our intended audiences?
3. What do they need to know?
4. **How are we going to tell them?**



## What Do We Need To Say to Our Audience To Get Them To Join Us?

- Effective messages:
  - Are based on audience's attitudes, practices, values and beliefs.
  - Solve a problem for the audience.
  - Motivate the audience to think, feel and **ACT**.
  - Make sense to your audience.



## Common Mistakes in Message Development

- Mistake #1
  - Too much information
  - Not enough values
- Mistake #2
  - Attempts to change values of intended audience instead of meeting them where they start, with what they value.
- Mistake #3
  - Overlooks pretesting and revising.



## Creating Materials/Messages for a Particular Audience

- Use evaluation data to tell your success stories.
- Use data to talk about:
  - Trends
  - Successes/need to sustain successes
  - Big ideas/a vision of future success



## How Will We Deliver the Message?

- What channels are most appropriate for the audience?
- Do we need to develop our own special activities?
  - Can we build on existing activities?
- Do materials need to be developed?



## Typical Delivery Channels

- Interpersonal
  - Individual people, one-on-one
- Community based
  - Schools, malls, parks, employers, nonprofit organizations
- Mass media
  - Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet



## Activities, Events, and Materials

### Activities and Events:

- Awareness Day Presentation
- News conferences
- Editorial board meetings
- Benefit races
- Parades
- Blogs and listservs
- Conferences
- One-on-one meetings
- More...

### Materials:

- News releases
- Flyers and brochures
- Fact sheets
- Bookmarks
- Web sites
- PowerPoint presentations
- Videos/PSAs
- More...



## How Will We Deliver the Message to Our Audience?

- Use your audience research to answer the following:
  - How do we best reach our audience?
  - Where do they live, work, and play?
  - Whom do they trust?
  - How do we get others to help?



## Pulling It All Together

*A couple of examples...*



## Pulling It All Together...

- Intended audience: **Project director**
- Programmatic goal:
  - Ensure program is implemented to fidelity.
- Communication goal:
  - Drive program decisions during grant period.
- Messaging (what do we need to tell them?)
  - Straightforward report of all data
  - Not pass vs. fail, but pointing out how to improve quality
- Channel (how are we going to tell them?)
  - Bound report with easy-to-read executive summary



## Pulling It All Together: Another Example

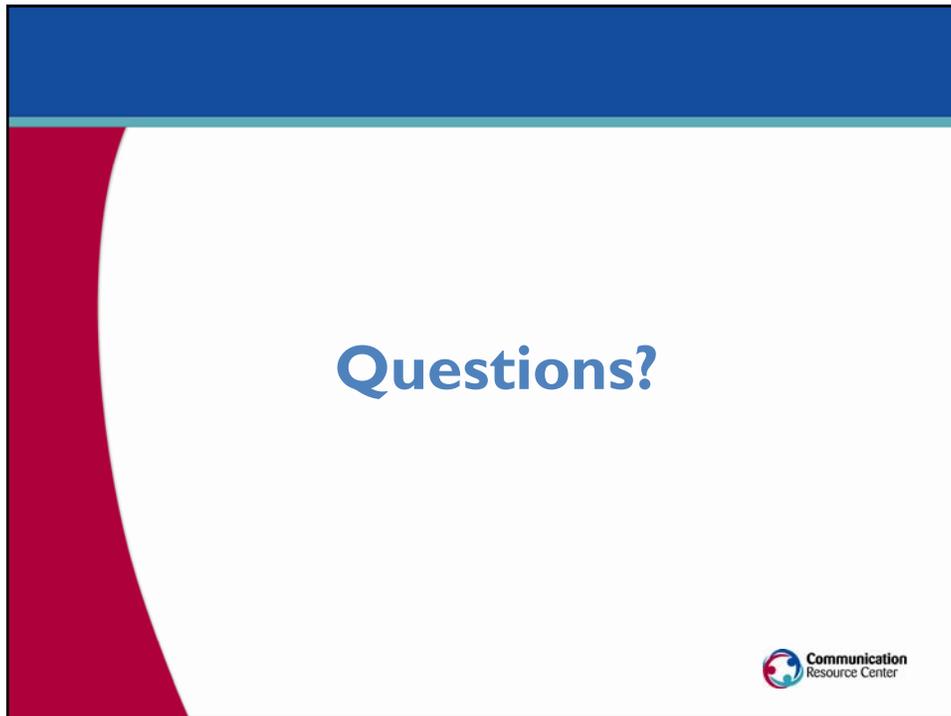
- **Intended audience: Teachers**
- **Programmatic goal:**
  - Implement anti-bullying curriculum in all elementary schools.
- **Communication goal:**
  - Convince teachers to implement anti-bullying curriculum (aka “yet another program”).
- **Messaging**
  - Present data that shows program will reduce classroom disruptions allowing more time to teach.
- **Channel**
  - Have a teacher who has used the program present the data and talk to the teachers about the difference it’s made.



## Your Turn To Pull It All Together

- **Take a few minutes to draft a plan for your initiative.**
  - Intended audience
  - Programmatic goal
  - Communication goal
  - Messaging: (what do we need to tell them?) include data reference
  - Channel (how are we going to tell them?)





Questions?



Communication Resource Center



Communication Resource Center

Adrienne Dealy  
Communication Specialist  
1-800-790-2647 ext. 4967  
[Adrienne.A. Dealy@MacroInternational.com](mailto:Adrienne.A.Dealy@MacroInternational.com)



A Life in the Community for Everyone  
**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services