

Producing advertising that works

Introduction

This document shows you how to advertise effectively. It concentrates on print advertising but many of the tips are true for broadcast and e-media too.

Summary

- Decide your aims
- Research your audience
- Focus on what interests them
- Ensure you
 - Attract their attention
 - Keep their interest
 - Arouse desire
 - Help them to act
- Plan your evaluation
- Pre-test the advert with your audience before the campaign starts
- Advertise
- Evaluate

When to run campaigns

In June 2004, the Health Development Agency (HDA) produced a health briefing paper, 'The effectiveness of public health campaigns'. This concluded that mass media campaigns (e.g. those using TV, radio, newspapers and/or magazines) could be justified under all or some of the following circumstances;

- **When wide exposure is desired** This could be aimed at the general public or a more specialised audience.
- **When the message needs to be put across very quickly**
- **When useful public discussion results from a thought provoking campaign**
- **When awareness is a main goal** Mass media campaigns have generally aimed primarily to change knowledge, awareness and attitudes as a contribution to the overall goal of changing behaviour. Campaigns are not generally expected to change behaviour on their own. (Although the HDA quote a regional TV campaign that was effective in reducing smoking by 1.2% over 18 months. I wonder if perhaps this is because it referred people who already wanted to give up to services that could help them.)
- **When the behaviour change goal is simple** e.g. persuading someone to get immunised every year rather than take exercise several times a week
- **When the media is friendly and 'on-side'**
- **When the campaign is supported by other services** e.g. specialist workers, phone lines etc. How does advertising fit in with the overall process you are involved in? For example, if you produce posters to encourage people to practice safer sex, are health and other professionals geared up to providing young people with condoms?
- **When a suitable budget exists** i.e. there is enough money both to do a reasonable media campaign and the work needed to back it up?
- **When the agenda includes public relations** This could be aimed at the public or colleagues.

First, do your research

- What do you know about the audience for your advert? Good social market research is essential here.
- Do you know not only what their current health behaviour is, but why they do it e.g. why don't people use condoms?
- Do you know what media they pay attention to? Depending on how self-aware your target group are you can either ask them these questions out right or explore them in other ways. It is often useful to buy magazines aimed at your audience. What issues are in it? What are the ads like?
- Who are your audience most likely to respond to? This could be an expert, the person providing the service, a peer, someone famous or whoever. For example if it a campaign to gets lads to use condoms are they more likely to listen a girl saying 'Put this on and I'll take these off' (as one Dutch ad put it) or to a mate. I don't know the answer for any particular group, but it is useful info to find out.
- Sometimes you may want to reach a group through another group. An example of this has been campaigns aimed at parents of children who may be sexually active.
- The model developed by Prochaska and DiClemente is also worth considering. It grouped people into
 - Those who weren't even contemplating changing their behaviour *The early Aids ads are examples of campaigns aimed at this group)*
 - Those you were contemplating it, *(Some ads about contraception have been aimed at this group)*
 - Those who were in the process of changing their behaviour,
 - People who had relapsed *(Campaigns reminding people that Aids is still an issue)*
 - And those who had maintained behaviour change but still needed encouragement. *(E.g. the 'Keep it Up' campaign aimed at gay men.)*

Which of these does your target groups fit into?

Know your aims

- Ask yourself 'How do we want the target group to respond to the ad?'
Do you want them to feel something? This could be scared? (Some people would say that this isn't ethical. Though HDA Briefing 7, 2004 quoted earlier suggests that 'threatening' and 'supportive' styles can complement each other.) It could be reassured that they are doing the right thing or that someone can help them. It could be amused, if you want to create a relaxed image about a particular service. Alternatively, do you want them to think about some thing in a particular way? (However, emotions may be better way to influence people than *facts on their own.*)
- Many advertisers believe that these are better questions to consider than concentrating on what message you want to tell the target group. The focus is then on their response to your advert.
- AIDA is an advertising model that stresses the need for the target group to do something as the result of campaign. This could be change their behaviour or use a service. What do you want them to do? (AIDA is covered in more detail further on.)
- Check what the literacy and numeracy rates are for your target group and take this into account.
- Remember the ad is for the audience. You don't have to like it yourself.

The advert is about the client not the service

- People are interested in your service or message only in as much as it helps them in their lives. Focus everything on them.

- Turn any facts you use into personal experience to make it feel more relevant. Teenagers in particular respond to stories.
- There should be a promise in the ad. Make sure the information you give is something they can actually use and benefit from e.g. where to go for help or what to do if you're thinking of having sex. Don't however dictate to people what they should do.
- Only deal with one issue per ad.
- When you advertise you aren't only promoting a particular message, such as 'What to do if you have an STI'. You are also creating an image about the service that produced the ad. What personality do you believe the service should have and can live up to? (This isn't just about advertising but about everything the service does.) It maybe worthwhile producing ads with the same consistent personality overtime, though the messages may vary.
- It may be necessary to eventually change the personality if you or the client group moves on. You may also want to promote different aspects of your corporate personality with different target groups. This is possible as long as you are using specific publications aimed at specific groups.
- I remember one GUM department producing leaflets that used a logo of a happy heterosexual couple. The image it had created was sending out a clear message that the service wasn't for gay people, or perhaps even anyone who had casual sex.
- By creating a personality or image you are also trying to build up an ongoing *relationship* with the people you are advertising to. By doing research to create a personality they can relate to, you can create a shared agenda to move forward with together.

AIDA

AIDA is a model often quoted in advertising theory. It stands for

- **Get Attention**
E.g. 'That poster's striking. I think I'll check it out'
- **Hold Interest**
E.g. 'It's about teenage pregnancy. It's quite moving and relevant to my worries about my daughter'
- **Arouse Desire**
E.g. 'I really don't want us to end up in the same situation as the people in the poster. I've left sorting this out too long.' (Suggests a feeling state but could be intellectual too.)
- **Obtain Action**
E.g. 'I'm going to ring the helpline about my daughter.'

Ideas for ads

Is there an idea in

- The product/service/campaign name or logo? *'Are you going on your own or with some MATES?'*
- The packaging? *Many condom ads have included the condom still in its wrapper*
- How or where the product is made? *The HEA ran some on making condoms*
- The product's history? *The HEA again did this with condoms*
- The service/product's old advertising? *'Son of pregnant man' anyone?*
- What happens if you use the product/service? *A twist on this was the HEA campaign told in four pictures about when to mention condoms (step 3) which ended with the couple enjoying sex (step 4).*
- What happens if you don't use the product/service? *The US have done this about condoms, 'See Dick go. Watch Jane grow.' (Dick & Jane being characters in learn to read books in the US.)*

- In showing what happens with and without the product/service in the same ad? *An EU campaign included this approach about safer and unsafe sex.*
- In where the ad will run? *An imaginary example could be 'Playing away? Use condoms' in a football programme.*

Advertising techniques

- Technique isn't as important as knowing what you are trying to achieve and why.
- However some of the options are to promote
 - The benefit of the product (behaviour or service), e.g. *peace of mind, health.* (An example would be the HEA condom campaign: *'Not trying to stop your sex life – but make it last longer.'*)
 - The attributes of the product or service, e.g. *reliable, confidential etc.*
 - The values attached to the product, behaviour or service. *Words like family planning, contraception or rubber johnnies all probably have different values attached to them.*
 - That the user is part of a group e.g. *the Pepsi Generation* (The closest to a sexual health example I can think of is *'Second Summer of Love.'*)
 - The role of the user, e.g. *loving partner, lad about town.*
- One technique is to have a 'straight' caption with a 'twisted' picture, e.g. *'How would you feel if you fell pregnant now?' with a picture of a pregnant man.*
- Or try a straight picture with a twisted caption e.g. *'Where to go if you want a good time tonight' and a picture of a hospital. The text underneath could say 'Our contraceptive advice service is open here 4-6 PM every day'*
- Or two conflicting sentences put together. *Headline: 'Orgasm. £1 million or nearest offer.'*
Text: 'The cost of bringing up the average child in the UK today is £1 million over 18 years. Or you can get free contraception from...' (I made this up but you get the idea.)
- Use a detail to illustrate a point. *If you wanted to show how relaxed staff are about sex, how about 'Our condoms come in lots of different flavours and we've all tried all 7 of them. Passion fruit came out tops'.*
- Use a story. *A number of HIV campaigns have been built round a case study.*
- Create a whole atmosphere. *If you wanted to advertise a GUM department you could write an ad with lots of pictures and text that gave an impression of what going there would be like, what the staff are like etc.*
- Typographical ideas. *The 'LOVE' posters which used a condom as the 'o' did this.*
- The format of the ad may dictate what you do. A billboard you see as you drive past is different from a magazine advert you can choose to read in detail.

Slogans

- Adverts don't necessarily need a 'catchy' slogan to be effective. However if you feel you need one, try;
 - Rhyming (*"Don't get hot, If you ain't got"* was a slogan used by the 'Bring Your Own Condom' campaign. Some of the 'o's' were made up from condoms. Another is *'Before you get into bed, use your head.'*)
 - Sibilance (repetition of 's' sound: *"Safer Sex"*)
 - Assonance (repetition of vowel sounds: *"See Dick go. Watch Jane grow".*)
 - Onomatopoeia (imitates the sound it represents: *"schhh...you know who"* was one used by Schweppes to mimic the sound of a bottle opening. Make up a sexual health one of your own!)
 - Alliteration (repetition of word beginnings: *'Pick up a Penguin'*, though this isn't a sexual health reference from the South Pole Health Education Unit as far as I know)
- In your headlines don't use full stops as you want the reader to carry on to the next line.

- If you want people to look at the picture first put this above the headline. If you want them to read the headline first put this at the top.
- Famous adman David Ogilvy said "On average, five times as many people read the headlines as read the body copy. It follows that, unless your headline sells your product, you have wasted 90 percent of your money."
- More people read the captions under a picture than get round to reading the main text. So you may want to put key information in the captions. (This is for the kind of ad that reads more like an article than a simple poster.)
- You can use the same ad up to four times in a magazine as different people will see it every time.

Check your ad

- Part of the advert maybe about giving detailed information. This could be about a service, medication or a specific behaviour. Check that you have included everything that you need to.
- Six general useful questions to consider are
 - Who?
 - What?
 - When?
 - Why?
 - Where?
 - How?
- Try setting 'Word' to give you full grammar feedback. Go to tools/options/spelling & grammar/settings.
- Test your ad with the target group.
- Also check it with the section on ethics and the law
- If you are putting the advert in a newspaper, check where they are going to put it. Always have it in a right hand page if you can. Evidence shows more people will see it than on the left.

Ethics and the law

- Who else see will see your campaign other than the intended audience? The HEA campaign '*What's the difference between HIV and Aids? Time*' was aimed at people who didn't have HIV but were taking risks. However because it was positioned in mainstream papers it upset many people who were HIV positive. So be careful if you use your local paper, as it is a mass media publication seen by everyone. The alternative approach would be to target messages in particular magazines aimed at specific audiences.
- That's not to say that you don't need to inch forward with the general public on difficult health/sexual issues or accept controversy at times. Check out that someone senior from your organisation will support what you say however.
- Using fear as a technique is quite common in health education campaigns. It can backfire however if people simply ignore or deny the ad in an attempt to protect themselves. If the risk is overstated then the campaign can also lose credibility. People who read it may also get stressed and unhealthy because of it. Some issues such as sex may also already have enough negative messages attached to them without adding any more. (However HDA Briefing 7, 2004 suggests that 'threatening' and 'supportive' styles can complement each other.)
- Remember to be careful not to breach copyright by using other organisations' images.
- If you use photos of real people and imply that they are doing something that they shouldn't be, your organisation could be sued. Therefore, if you had a picture of anonymous local

young people, and used it without their permission to illustrate an advert on underage sex, you could be in trouble.

- There are strict NHS guidelines about the use of the official logo, which fonts to use etc. For more details please go to the NHS identity guidelines at www.nhsidentity.nhs.uk/

Plan your evaluation now

- If you know what your aim is, it is much easier to evaluate how well you have done.
- Before you sign a contract find out from the companies that are offering to sell you the space on the plasma screen, billboard or bus side how many people will see it. If you divide this by how much it will cost this will give you a price per person. This is useful in deciding who to advertise with. You may be interested in particular groups of people so do the same calculation with them too.
- If you simply want to increase numbers using your service, it is quite easy to measure the result of an advertising campaign. You may however want to ask people which advert they had seen if you using a range. This will help you next time you want to advertise, in terms of both where to advertise and how much you need to spend to get the response you want.
- If you want to measure an aim such as a behaviour change, you may need to use before and after questionnaires to get an idea of if the campaign worked. Focus groups are another idea to see if your target group responded to the idea. Alternatively, sometimes you may be able to use a proxy measure, such as how many people rang you up about the issue the campaign promoted.

References

The main thrust of this document is taken from

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- PROCHASKA, J. AND DICLEMENTE, C., 1983. Stages And Processes Of Self-change Of Smoking Towards An Integrated Model Of Change. *Journal Of Consulting Clinical Psychology*, 51, Pages 390-395.
- STRONG, E.K., 1925. Theories of Selling. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 9, Pages 75-86. (For the AIDA model.)

However, I have also included practical examples that I came across when I was a sexual health worker. I will add references for these as I find them. (Alternatively contact me at mail@sexanddrugsandrockandhealth.com)

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