

# A Social Marketing Approach to Proper Drug Disposal

Social marketing is a systematic approach to support behavior change related to health, human service, environmental and community issues that is based in commercial marketing principles and processes. Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman, marketing professors at Northwestern University, first elucidated this approach in 1971.<sup>1</sup> Alan Andreasen, a professor at the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University, and an early proponent of social marketing, defines it as “the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, executions, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of society.”<sup>2</sup>

The Academy for Educational Development, a social change think tank in Washington, DC, provided a fresh view of social marketing, when it defined the approach as a way to make behaviors “fun, easy and popular.”<sup>3</sup> More than just a catchy mnemonic, the terms refer to determinants of behavior identified from various behavior change theories by a National Institute of Mental Health consensus panel.<sup>4</sup> “Fun” refers to whether the target audience perceives meaningful benefits in the proposed behavior. “Easy” refers to whether the intended audience has the knowledge, skills and other resources to enact the behavior successfully. Finally, “popular” refers to the social influences on the audience, whether from family, their ethnic group of origin or coworkers and neighbors. Considering interventions for environmental problems using this framework takes program planners out of their usual planning paradigms, and invites them to develop interventions that are responsive to the realities their target audiences face.

Six concepts form the core of the social marketing approach<sup>5</sup>: a focus on behavior change as the “bottom line;” interventions that are audience driven; segmenting or targeting of mass audiences into smaller, homogeneous groups; using exchange theory to balance the costs and benefits an audience

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<sup>1</sup> Kotler, P., & Zaltman, G. (1971). “Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change.” *Journal of Marketing*, 35, 3-12.

<sup>2</sup> Andreasen, Alan. (1995). *Marketing social change: Changing behavior to promote health, social development, and the environment*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, Bill. (2007). “Social Marketing: Making it Fun, Easy, and Popular.” 2<sup>nd</sup> National Social Marketing Conference, National Social Marketing Centre. September 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Oxford, England.

<sup>4</sup> Fishbein, M., Triandis, H. C., Kanfer, F. H., Becker, M., Middlestadt, S. E., Eichler, A. (2001). “Factors influencing behavior and behavior change.” In Baum, A. Revenson, T. A. and Singer, J. E. (Eds.), *Handbook of health psychology*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

<sup>5</sup> Andreasen, Alan. (1995). “Marketing Social Marketing in the Social Change Marketplace.” *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 35, 1, 3-13.

associates with behaviors; consideration of competing behaviors that may be more attractive to audiences than the behavior being promoted; use of the four traditional commercial marketing strategies of product, price, place and promotion.

Organizations as diverse as the Environmental Protection Agency, The Nature Conservancy and the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University have used social marketing to address a variety of environmental issues, including: watershed management; household recycling; reducing home energy use; encouraging multiple occupancy vehicle use.<sup>6</sup> The *PH:ARM* program of Seattle, also utilized social marketing to pilot a program to take back household medications, in order to keep them out of the water supply.<sup>7,8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Internet Search. Retrieved November 11/6/08.

<sup>7</sup> Kotler, P., & Lee, N. (2008). *Social marketing: Improving the quality of life*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication, Nancy Lee, October 8, 2008.