



Communications for Nurturing Stewardship

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Barrier Analysis

Barrier analyses help communicators determine which behaviors they should inspire people to change. Behavior change theory assumes that people will naturally gravitate to actions that have **high benefits** and **few barriers**.

Real and perceived barriers can vary widely among individuals. Sometimes, behaviors compete against each other, making people choose one behavior while rejecting another. (McKenzie-Mohr and Smith 1999) The function of a social marketing program is to change the ratios of benefits and barriers by:

- Increasing the benefits of target behavior
- Decreasing the barriers of target behavior
- Decreasing the benefits of the competing behavior
- Increasing the barrier of the competing behavior

The ratios of the benefits and barriers can be plotted on a matrix to visualize the relationships. The table below, adapted from McKenzie-Mohr 's 1999 book, is filled in with an example from a stormwater campaign.

Template:

	New Behavior:	Competing behavior:	Competing behavior:
Perceived Benefits			
Perceived Barriers			

Message Development

A message is more than a slogan, a tagline, or a “sound bite.” A message is a short paragraph that makes a case for action in a carefully organized rationale. A good message states why your particular audience should care about your issue, and it builds the case by speaking to the values and concerns of that audience.

It states and describes a threat or problem, relates that threat to personal values and concerns and explains a solution (that also aligns with those values and concerns). Messages describe the action(s) that will address the need. The best messages also give people something specific to do to take personal action and clarify who is responsible for the problem in the first place.

For example:

Let’s say a popular beach has been degraded by algal blooms and high bacteria. We want to reach families who enjoy and live near that beach and inspire them to change lawn-care practices—specifically leaf maintenance—to reduce algal pollution. Here’s an example of a message that could be used to encourage this particular audience to take this specific action.

Problem: Beach closings from algal blooms and bacteria. Leaves and other runoff from yards and driveways is flushed into the Lake

Presumed audiences: Community members adjacent to Our Lake; families that use the beach.

Values: Family, sense of place, quality of life, community heritage, responsibility, future

Concerns: Public health, especially for children, loss of community asset and image as a visitor destination.

Solution: Adopt new community-wide lawn care habits to control pollution that fouls the beach and the water

Personal Action: Bag your leaves, as the city code prescribes

Message:

We live in an area rich with breathtaking lakes and rolling hills. Our waterways are a distinctive part of our region, impacting wildlife, recreation, business and development. Our Lake is an integral part of our community’s identity and it drives our economy. Sadly, our lake is not always treated with respect. Pollution and debris collected from yards, driveways, streets and parking lots flows into our lake, damaging our lake and our community’s viability. Simply, jobs, property values and economic stability depend on a healthy lake. As the community that lives around and enjoys Our Lake, we are all connected. Our actions in our yards, homes and neighborhoods directly affect the Lake and each other. We can cause algae blooms and increase pollution, or we can restore the lake to its most beautiful, most useful state. The choice is ours. Visit WEBSITE to learn how bagging your autumn leaves can reduce pollution from your yard today.

Successful Environmental Communications Tips

- Be goal focused – consider the specific behavior change needed
- Audience-Based
- Think about what people *know* and what they *feel*
- Make it personal
- Anticipate barriers and address them
- Evaluation and adaptive strategies and plans

Environmental Communication Tips

- Avoid jargon like “riparian,” “vascular,” “extirpated”
- Talk about real places, e.g. “forests” not “public lands”
- Do use terms like “habitat,” “ecosystem” and “nature”
- Put a human face on a human story
- Use compelling images
- Some issues are “right vs. right”—especially when values are involved
- Lead with stories, follow with facts
- Facts are still important – don’t forget to do your homework
- Messages are not permanent:
 - Create
 - Test (focus groups, sample audience)
 - Adapt

YOU ARE NOT YOUR AUDIENCE!