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The author distinguishes two types and three levels of communication planning. Identifies and discusses issues and considerations involved in communication planning for public campaigns. Amic 007466d.

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Communication Planning and Public Campaigns*

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1. Two Types of Communication Planning

Communication planning has in recent years attracted the attention of many communication researchers in a number of important seminars and conferences. Many models, approaches and methods have been suggested for a better understanding of communication planning as an emergent topical area in communication studies. Yet the discussion on this particular topic is sometimes confused because of the failure of some researchers to make a crucial distinction between two aspects of communication planning. I am here referring to the distinction between "communication infrastructure planning" and "communication operation planning."

Communication infrastructure planning is concerned with the development and maintenance of communication systems. The topics especially popular under this category are those on the development of satellite communications,

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electronic communications, telephone service, as well as the conventional mass media, in a society or institution. In most societies, the planning for the development of communication infrastructure is closely related to some technico-economic factors in the society, and is often subsumed as part of the overall economic planning in the nation.

On the other hand, communication operation planning deals with the use and control of communication elements and contents for development objectives. It is thus closely related to the popular issue of development-support communication. Communication operation planning often accepts the existing communication infrastructure as given and is designed and carried out under the politico-social constraints in the society.

The above two types of communication planning are no doubt closely related to each other. Yet it should be noted that they deal with distinctive issues and involve different planning objectives and processes. While both elements of "communication" and "development" are essential here, communication infrastructure planning is concerned with the development of communication systems, and communication operation planning is concerned with the uses of communication systems for development.

2. Three Levels of Communication Planning

Along a different dimension, three levels of communication planning can also be distinguished. Firstly, at the national level, national communication policies can be identified as guidelines for communication activities. Communication planning at this level is carried out to develop and utilize national communication components for development goals.

At the intermediate level is institutional level communication planning, which includes planning at the ministerial, departmental, or agency level. Also under this category is communication planning involved in media institutions such as newspapers, radios and television stations, or agricultural communication network. The focus here is on the development or operation of the communication components within a given institution.

Thirdly, there is project level communication planning, whereby planning is carried out and implemented to support a certain development projects. The development project concerned can be of a broad and long-term nature such as those on public health, national language or family planning. Or, the project can be more specific in objectives and of a short-term duration such as public campaigns on road safety, energy conservation, save water, or the consumption of frozen fish.

Again, it should be pointed out that the three levels

of communication planning identified above reflect only different focuses on the unit of analysis. Discussion on one level of communication planning almost always involves the other levels of planning.

3. Planning Public Campaigns

This paper purports to identify and discuss certain issues involved in communication planning for public campaigns. It is believed that public campaigns represent an important type of communication activities in developing countries today. An analysis of public campaigns within the context of communication planning should benefit both the campaign planner and communication researcher.

In the present discussion, a public campaign is defined as an organized intensive effort to inform, educate or persuade a mass target population for specific development-oriented objectives. As such, planning of public campaigns is best analysed as a case of communication operation planning. The task confronted by the planner is how to make use of the existing communication resources and to design communication strategies in order to support the campaign to reach its objectives.

It is also obvious that, by definition, public campaigns belong to the category of project level communication planning, since such campaigns are either themselves development projects or are part of such projects.

Based on the above definition, public campaigns can be classified along a number of dimensions:

- A. Depending on the major objective of the campaign, it may be primarily concerned with a change in the information or knowledge level of the target group (e.g. literacy campaign), a change in their opinions or attitudes (e.g. courtesy campaign), or a change in their behavior or habits (e.g. anti-smoking campaign). Many campaigns of course aim at changes in more than one aspect and make concerted efforts to promote changes at all levels. One example is the family planning campaign that aims to provide information about contraceptives, to persuade the target population to change their attitudes towards birth control and the value of children, and to convince them to adopt the use of contraceptives.
- B. According to the sponsorship, a campaign may be government-sponsored, semi-governmental, or non-governmental. By sponsorship here, we mean the institutional sponsorship, rather than the financial sponsorship only. While in many developing countries, most campaigns are government sponsored, there are cases whereby voluntary organizations (e.g. professional groups, welfare

agencies, or even religious organizations) may carry out large scale campaigns for development purposes. Semi-governmental campaigns with strong government backing may be quite functional in cases when the situation does not allow official government endorsement.

- C. Public campaigns can also be distinguished according to the type of target group intended. Target groups can be geographically classified. Thus some campaigns are nation-wide; other can be regional or local and specific to a community. In addition, depending on the nature of the campaign, some campaigns have the general public as the target group (e.g. literacy campaign, national language campaign, courtesy campaign); some aim at more specific categories of population (e.g. drivers, school children, hawkers, etc.)

The potential resources and institutional support available to the campaign planner differ from one campaign to the other, to a great extent depending on the major objective, sponsorship and target group of the campaign. Different types of public campaigns thus also call for different campaign strategies.

4. Campaign Planning Unit

Structurally, there are two types of campaign planning units. The planning unit may be of a regular and permanent nature as part of a bigger organizational set-up such the national family planning agency, whereby public campaigns are regularly carried out. On the other hand, a campaign committee (often called "working committee" or "coordinating committee") may be formed on an ad hoc basis exclusively for a given public campaign.

Whatever the structural set-up, it is advisable that the campaign planning unit should in some way include representatives from relevant Ministries and Departments, community leaders, media specialists, and experts on the campaign issue in question (e.g. road-safety specialists).

The functions of the campaign planning group include the following:

- A. To define the rationale and the objectives of the campaign,
- B. To decide the target group of the campaign,
- C. To seek and pool resources (funds, facilities, manpower, etc.) needed for the campaign,
- D. To coordinate campaign activities among related institutions and social groups,
- E. To plan and determine strategies and campaign activities,

F. To implement campaign plans,

G. To evaluate the result of the campaign.

It can be seen that the role and functions of a campaign planning group is not different from that of other communication planning groups.

5. External Elements for Campaign Planning

The campaign planner operates under certain "external conditions" (either supports or constraints) which must not be taken for granted in campaign planning. Such elements are more or less "outside of the control" of the campaign planner, yet these are the factors he must take into account and accommodate to for a successful campaign:

- A. Demographic-geographical factors: the size of the area to be covered, geographical features of the area, population distribution, population density, age-sex distribution, etc.
- B. Political factors: the extent of political control exerted by the government, political stability (and continuity), the presence (or absence) and influence of political opposition, etc.
- C. Economic factors: the standard of living, the dominant pattern of economic structure, level of industrialization, etc.

- D. Cultural factors: cultural norms and values, religious beliefs and practices, "national character", orientation to change, etc.
- E. Social factors: ethnicity and language (extent of diversity), literacy and education, social stratification, community and kinship organization, etc.
- F. Communication factors: communication networks, channels, media, etc.

A campaign planner must make careful study of the above elements in the society so as to understand the constraints and to fully utilize the facilities available in the drafting of campaign strategies.

6. Organizational Supports

In carrying out a campaign, the planning unit or committee relies much on the existing organizational structure and institutional relationships it can establish with government ministries, industrial and commercial bodies, voluntary associations and media organizations. In effect, no public campaign of a nation-wide scope, even in a small country like Singapore, can live an isolated existence without external assistance in terms of resources, skills and facilities. Institutional cooperation enables easy and speedy spread of campaign messages to reach the general or specific target population. Since target groups

are often structurally sectionalized according to social status and role, the chances of reaching the majority of these pockets of population are enhanced when the planner keeps in touch with the leaders of relevant organizations and institutions.

In trying to permeate the grassroots, the campaign planner should maintain close contact with three major sectors in the society: the government, the industrial and commercial, and the mass media. It is obvious that an average member of society has either the occupational contact with one of these sectors or at least some indirect contact establish through various types of transactions.

A. **Government Sector:**

In government-sponsored campaigns, the various government ministries are usually kept well-informed of forthcoming and current-going public campaigns. Although in the planning and actual participation of campaigns, not every government department will be directly involved, all could provide some kind of advisory services as and when necessary.

In most developing countries, the government is the largest employer and often has ready access to reach and mobilize its employees and their families. Such strong organizational network should never be overlooked by the campaign planner.

B. Industrial and Commercial Sector:

Industrial and commercial bodies are normally approached to participate or to contribute. The powerful institutions like the unions, trade associations and chambers of commerce should be invited to sit in campaign planning meetings. These representatives are thus able to commit their organizations to the campaign either financially or in other even more direct ways. Such organizations, with their linkages and influences upon their members and clients, are able to mobilize support and disseminate campaign messages to a vast group of population.

C. Communication Media Sector:

Public campaigns are basically communication campaigns. As such, the campaign planner must utilize the existing communication channels and media available for his campaign purposes. Close coordination and linkage with the media institutions are thus crucial. Obviously, it is through the press, radio and television that the campaign messages can be most effectively disseminated to the general public.

7. Conclusion

Many public campaigns are carried out in developing countries every year. Some are successful, some are not. While this paper discusses some issues and considerations involved in planning for public campaigns, obviously more should be done and can be done to develop a model for a systematic analysis of public campaigns. Especially useful will be comparative studies on various campaigns in one or more societies in terms of the planning processes, strategies and concomitant factors related to the effect of campaigns. Much insights can be gained from such comparative studies for a further understanding of communication planning approaches.