

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR

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### Abstract

*Promoting sustainable behaviour is not an easy process and for tackling the environmental issues, it requires a behaviour change at every level. Changing attitude towards behaviour for sustainable development is important but mere attitude change is not enough to achieve the goals. Research studies show that there is no direct link between values and action. We need to use the method that changes attitude as well as behavior. As changing the behaviour is a complex process, innovative and practical solutions are required at every level of the society. Each behaviour is determined by many inter-related factors, which are to be addressed simultaneously to facilitate the behaviour change. Messaging to the audience towards behavior for sustainable development is not an easy task. For this, communication strategies are to be adopted to make desirable changes in the individual. The sender /agency taking up the challenge should also take care of the group to which the issues are delivered to with a pre-notion of, what changes are to be expected from each. For this, the sender for the message should be well versed with different modes of communication strategies and the type of audience to whom the message is intended for.*

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### Introduction

Environmental sustainability is a key issue for human societies throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century's world. All countries need to secure sufficient quality- in an equilibrium basis of natural resources, ecosystems, and the diversity of plant and animal species, including the environment of human being. To attain the concept of sustainable development, our focus should be on nature of people, what they do and how this doing be, will change for a common good. Promoting sustainable behaviour is not an easy process and for tackling the environmental issues, it requires change in behaviour which can contribute much towards the goal of sustainable development.

In this context, an individual or an agency which expects an individual or a society to be changed should have a basic knowledge of communication techniques and also the awareness level of audience which the agency is targeting to get desirable sustainable behaviour. As changing the behaviour is a complex process, innovative and practical solutions are required at each stage in each level of society. So the messaging to the audience towards promoting behaviour for sustainable development is not an easy task. Effective communication strategies are to be adopted, to make desirable changes in the individual. The sender/ agency should also take care of the group to which the issues are dealt with and what changes are to be expected from each. The purpose of dynamic communication for sustainable development is more than dissemination of information. The communication strategy for sustainable development behaviour is special because of these following reasons;

1. Complexity of the concept of Sustainable development behaviour as a science that economical, legal, basic management, political sociological & psychological information.
2. Personal, emotional and spiritual level impact- triggered by the sustainable development.

As the complexity of the knowledge increases and making change in the behaviour is a difficult task, the interventions in the strategies communication have to be systematic and planned. The intervention in communication depends on the type of target population to whom the communication should be delivered. If the people are totally ignorant, the intervention in communication should be for creating awareness which aimed at recommending solutions. Those who are aware of positive behavior, the task is, to develop interest through the intervention. In the case of a target population, which is already in the path of change, counseling and motivation are to be provided along with information regarding proper usage. In the case of group of where they are trying the new behavior, then the intervention should be the type of encouraging further use, showing the benefits by driving away the barriers and showing the encounter problems they had tackled. For the population who support the new behavior, they should be able to disseminate with supports the new behaviour.

In this back drop, the investigator tries to develop new strategies which are dynamic in presenting the behaviour for sustainable development with, new modes of communication suitable to the above described group of target audience. Such communication modes may consider mainly

1. How to deliver message to foster behavior for sustainable development ?
2. To whom the message is for?

### **How to Deliver Messages?**

**1. Specific and Concrete Messages:** The key of effective message is its specificity. One should not tell the people to 'save the world'. Go green etc, but have to tell them how

it is made possible. The abstract and ambiguous language will confuse the target people. So, one should use only concrete phrases- those that people can imagine using their senses. Don't talk about 'green future' instead of it tell them what a "green future" is?

**2. Emphasis on Core of the Message:** The sender of the message should find core of the message and emphasis this as the lead to begin. Although there are many issues going around towards sustainable future, the focus of the message should target on one particular issue at a time.

**3. Back up with Data:** The sender of the message should have a clear and authentic proof and statistical details of what he or she is about to convey. The backup data includes details, statistics testable credentials and examples of the particular messages. Details make them vivid, statistics make them accessible, the testable credentials will claim the audience to test themselves and examples to state the message.

**4. Effective delivery:** Use 'you'. Focus messaging to the audience as it is mean for each individual. Highlight, each person's impact in such a way that they feel like, they will make a difference. For this, the sender should make obvious and spell out exactly how that particular behavioural change will get them what they desire. Ask people to visualize the positive benefits of the behavioural change. In some cases the decisions are not based on self interest, but identity. Here it is discusses what issue is going around and what someone will do in such a situation to solve. This will make the people feel that there are persons who take pains to care the environment.

**5. Take Care of "Bystander Effect":** During an emergency, people wish to appear compares and want to act in accordance with social norms. Seeing others looking clam and silent, they do nothing to solve in issue happening in front of them it's a "Bystander effect".

**6. Create a Vision:** If the sender has a clear vision, then only people will get an idea of the desirable behavioural change they should undergo to solve the current issue. If messaging gives an impression of, we must all take great sacrifices to avoid a hellish future, then it will not work. So the target audience should be delivered with simple and achievable vision with the clear idea.

## Segmenting the Audience

The sender should take care of the audience to which the message id delivered. For this one should divide the audience in terms of how much they know or care about the environment. Specifically the audience can be divided into three main groups.

**1. Students:** Usually the student groups are open minded, receptive to change, influenced by other similar student. So the sender can use fun events that are already happening to convey the message through a campaign. The sender can also approach students with similar interest to make a behavioural change.

**2. Faculty:** The faculties are in a nature of having questioning mind. A difficulty to engage them due to time constraints in an usual happening when an agency approaches them for a campaign. The positive factor of such a group is that they are dedicated if once engaged. This group will also be responsive to the authority. Here the sender should give flexible timing for the campaign. When targets such a group, the sender can use the higher authority/ dean to pass down messages of support of sustainability.

**3. Staff:** The staff communities are easy to engage, receptive to change and they belong to various organizations, departments and communities. In this case the sender can organize launch parties and they can use community leaders to support for sustainability through the behavioral change of that particular group. A better understanding of individual, barriers which hinders the sustainable behaviour and strategies to tackle those barriers, effective communication contributes much for an individual or an agency/organization which plays the role of a 'change champion'.

### Conclusion

Individuals and agencies are vital to deliver the campaign of sustainable behaviour. They are the primary agents of change who works for fostering the change in individual as well as in networks of the society. They act as the 'agents of change' and also act as 'change champions'. Voluntary agencies and organisations should act as the responsible agencies in this concern. The success can well be achieved if it will be at an organisational level which provides training for effective communication, selection of audience, provide economic incentives to remove the barriers and to implement the strategies which can foster the change. It is important to remember that the environmental problems we are all facing today and in future are huge and often poorly understood. Here lies the significance of agents of change and strategies which are appropriate and relevant which is flexible enough to adapt in each situation. This broad outlook helps to encourage sustainable behaviour viewed in the light of massive global challenges. Behavioural changes take time. Measures are needed to be put into place to influence social change and to respond to environmental pressures, to sustain the behaviour which fosters sustainable development.

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