

# SOCIAL MARKETING: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

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By Robert Donovan and Nadine Henley

## Book Review by R. Craig Lefebvre

This book, authored by two of Australia's leading social marketing researchers and practitioners, is a welcome addition to the social marketing literature for at least three reasons. First, it provides a showcase of social marketing projects conducted in Australia and other international venues that are not covered in other texts on the subject. Second, it may be the best presentation yet of an integration of theory, research, and practice in describing social marketing that reflects the authors' experience at each of these three levels. Finally, it is the first book since Manoff's *Social Marketing: New Imperative for Public Health* (1985) to firmly place its discussion of social marketing within a public health philosophy and framework.

In and of itself, the latter point – addressed in the first two chapters – makes this book required reading for anyone using social marketing in public health contexts. The authors position social marketing within a social change context and use the social determinants literature to expand its purview beyond just individual change models. They note that target groups for social marketing include groups not usually addressed by others – policymakers and legislators, service providers, opinion leaders, and businesses – and throughout the book provide examples of how these audiences have been incorporated into programs. The distinctions they draw between social marketing and other related approaches (e.g., not-for-profit marketing, cause-related marketing, corporate philanthropy, and others) are well thought out and if widely read would likely put an end to the fuzziness with which many often approach this task.

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DONOVAN, R., & HENLEY, N. (2003).  
*SOCIAL MARKETING: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE*.  
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA: IP COMMUNICATIONS.

Similarly, their discussion of the principles of social marketing in Chapter 2 is a succinct presentation of the essentials within a framework of two fundamental concepts (consumer orientation and exchange), three overarching principles (customer value, selectivity and concentration, and differential advantage), and three defining features (use of market research, integrated approach to implementation, and monitoring and influencing environmental forces). The statement they make that "In social marketing the product is often information designed to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change" (p. 33) is the first indication that the authors may have a different view of social marketing than others, and I was reminded immediately of Manoff's assertion that the "message is the product." Indeed, one of the seeming inconsistencies throughout the text is the interchangeable definitions of social marketing products – information, health outcomes, behaviors, and benefits (p. 240). Some of this inconsistency stems from the authors' attempt to use the nuances of core, augmented, and tangible products to define products, and one wonders if they are trying to force a commercial model onto a much more complex world of individual and social change. While these distinctions may have merit, the field will benefit from further exploring how these concepts apply to the work of social change.

Their third chapter, "Social Marketing and the Environment," is the showcase for the authors' understanding of the many influences on behavior that must be attended to by public health practitioners and researchers. They focus their attention on the "upstream" of behavioral determinants, including political-legal, demographic-economic, social-cultural, technological-physical, and the physical and social environments. They conclude

this chapter by observing that this "fundamental shift in public health strategy" to upstream issues is one that needs to be understood and incorporated by social marketers as they work in this arena.

The next two chapters present principles of communication and persuasion and models of attitude change. Their discussion covers little new ground for readers already familiar with communication models and attitude-behavior change theories. What is surprising, given the orientation of the first three chapters, is the lack of discussion of social change models. With the exception of a brief review of diffusion theory, the authors conclude Chapter 5 with a "synthesis" of models that is decidedly focused on individual behavior change. These authors are certainly not unique in adopting this "default" position, but it does highlight the apparent lack of a "social change" theoretical model to guide social marketing efforts.

"Research and Evaluation" examines many of the customary qualitative research methodologies and includes some nice examples of how they can be used for cross-cultural research studies. The authors' coverage of monitoring systems and evaluation methodologies is much more limited. The authors choose to focus on one monitoring methodology adapted from advertising research – continuous information tracking (CIT). While the methodology provides useful monitoring information (as the case example demonstrates), it is designed for tracking mass communication campaigns and is fairly labor intensive (a typical study conducts between 50–100 interviews each week with members of the target audience for the duration of the campaign). The CIT is certainly one approach to monitoring a social marketing program, but the authors present no other models or alternatives to monitoring

social marketing programs that may have other components – or no mass media campaign at all. Similarly, their discussion of evaluation is framed entirely within an epidemiological approach with reference to observational studies, randomized trials, and odds-ratios and logistic regressions. One would have welcomed a more developed presentation of program evaluation methodologies, a position that more social marketers are moving toward (see the Evaluation discussion from the 2003 Innovations in Social Marketing conference proceedings in *Social Marketing Quarterly*, Doner, 2003).

Chapter 7 on ethics in social marketing briefly reviews several theories of ethical decision-making that make a good introduction for those social marketers unfamiliar with this literature. The powerful point the authors make is that “the primary ethical issue in social marketing is the problem of power” (p. 173). The authors again make excellent use of a case study to introduce a short series of questions to guide social marketers in ethical decision-making.

The following chapter is devoted entirely to the concept of competition in social marketing, an important topic in social marketing today. The authors note the importance of focusing on competitive behaviors and benefits, yet focus most of their discussion on industry competitors such as tobacco and alcohol companies. The latter competitors are used to present such tactics as media advocacy and media education as a counterweight to their influence. Important additions they make to the list of potential competitors to social marketing programs are government and political party policies, which virtually all social marketers have likely encountered. And while the authors call for using social marketing to ensure that such competitors be challenged, they offer little in the way of how.

The market segmentation and target marketing chapter focuses on two specific strategies: stages of change segmentation (which they liken to consumer marketing’s buyer readiness model) and behavioral segmentation using a model proposed by Sheth and Frazier. This is a particularly useful presentation of approaches to audience segmentation and includes a discussion of that most difficult of decisions: selecting from among many potential audiences. The authors introduce the TARPARE model (with an illustrative example) as a useful heuristic that many social marketing practitioners should examine and incorporate into their own thinking on the subject. Other important contributions in this chapter are the sections on cross-cultural targeting and the use of tailoring in message design.

The previous chapters set up Chapter 10. Here the authors discuss the marketing mix as a framework for planning a comprehensive social marketing program. With the use of numerous examples, the concepts of product, price, place, and people are covered (the latter “P” introduced by the authors when services marketing is part of the overall social marketing program). The promotion “P” is covered in the next two chapters. As given away in the first chapter’s title, “Using Media in Social Marketing,” the discussion is heavily oriented toward mass media tactics, although attention is also given to “edutainment,” civic journalism, information technologies, and media advocacy. It is to the authors’ credit that they so comfortably incorporate these latter techniques into the social marketer’s tool box. The second “promotion” chapter discusses a variety of ways in which sponsorships have been used in Australia by public health programs. This presentation is notable for a review of several studies that have been conducted on the reach and effectiveness of sponsorship activities.

One wonders if by Chapter 13 the authors were running out of gas (or space). Entitled "Planning and Developing Social Marketing Campaigns," the expectation was that the preceding work would have been pulled together into an integrative model. Instead, what is encountered is a quick (two pages including one devoted to an exhibit) review of standard, iterative, and process planning models followed by an extended presentation of the PRECEDE-PROCEED model. This model is presented with little attention given to its implications for social marketing programs. Given the authors' experience with conducting numerous social marketing programs over the years, one also hoped for a discussion of the issues faced with implementing a program. Alas, we will have to wait.

The book concludes with three case studies. The first two, Immunize Australia and TravelSmart, present what are essentially health communications campaigns that are notable for the presence of outcome data. The third, Freedom from Fear, is a comprehensive effort aimed at male perpetrators of domestic violence. This case study eloquently lays out the program and touches key issues ranging from determining objectives and selecting target audiences to creating the marketing mix and conducting the outcome evaluation. It is a model for presenting social marketing case studies that one would like to see more researchers and practitioners adopt.

With the book coming in at 368 pages, it is clear that the field of social marketing is even larger than that, making a truly comprehensive review a daunting task. The authors clearly had to make decisions about what to include and exclude, and how much weight to give specific subjects. Despite some of the observations made earlier, their book is a unique contribution to the body of work in this area. Its focus on campaigns not well

known among North American readers is a plus. But more importantly, it represents the viewpoint of practitioners who are also well-schooled in commercial marketing thought and practice, the philosophy and culture of public health practice, and the behavioral theories and research models of the academic world. For that they deserve much credit and is why *Social Marketing: Principles and Practice* should be on every social marketer's bookshelf (but read it first!).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**R. Craig Lefebvre, Ph.D.**, is currently an independent consultant as Lefebvre Consulting Group. He is former Director of Health Communications and Social Marketing at the American Institutes for Research. He has spent over 19 years developing and evaluating social marketing programs at the community, state, and national level and is the author of over 65 articles in the fields of social marketing, community-based programs and health promotion. Dr. Lefebvre served as the 2003 ISM Steering Committee Chair and is co-editor of *Social Marketing Quarterly*.

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