

## Proposition 17

# The Future of Social Marketing

**In a Word** Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to effect behavioral change. It is a concept, process, and application for understanding who people are, what they desire, and then organizing the creation, communication, and delivery of products and services to meet their desires as well as the needs of society, and solve serious social problems.



## Introduction

Marketing is at a crossroads. Until 1960, when Levitt (1960) wrote *Marketing Myopia*, it had not been considered a serious function of strategic management. From there, the discipline developed at such pace that *Marketing Management* (Kotler and Keller 2008),<sup>1</sup> Philip Kotler's classic textbook, is in its 13th edition counting 816 pages.

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<sup>1</sup>The topics covered brand equity, customer value analysis, database marketing, e-commerce, value networks, hybrid channels, supply chain management, segmentation, targeting, positioning, and integrated marketing communications.

Organizations have never had such powerful information and communications technology<sup>2</sup> with which to interact with clients, audiences, and partners; explore, find, capture, store, analyze, present, use, and exchange information data and information about them; and tailor products and services accordingly. Along with that, never before have end users expected to interface so closely with organizations and with one another to define and shape what they need. In its highest form, marketing is now considered a social process, composed of human behavior<sup>3</sup> patterns concerned with exchange of resources or values.<sup>4</sup> It is no longer a mere function used to increase business profits.

Tellingly, in the 2010s, the attention of public sector agencies, nongovernment organizations, and the private sector is increasingly drawn to the potential of social marketing. In an age of climate change, environmental destruction, natural resource shortages, fast population growth, hunger and poverty, as well as insufficient social services, what contributions might marketing make? Expressly, some ask whether the tools of marketing can be used to promote public goods in areas other than public health, the traditional arena of social marketing.<sup>5</sup> Might, for instance, its applications help encourage wider socially and environmentally beneficial behavioral changes, promote protective behaviors, prevent risky behavior, increase use of community services, or facilitate the formulation and adoption of new policies and standards? The behavior, that is, not just of individual citizens but also of public sector agencies, nongovernment organizations, and the private sector.

## Definition

The term “social marketing” was coined by Kotler and Zaltman (1971). Drawing from bodies of knowledge such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and communication theory—with practical roots in advertising, public relations, and market research—it is the application of principles and techniques drawn from the commercial sector to influence a target audience to voluntarily

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<sup>2</sup>They encompass radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning.

<sup>3</sup>Human behavior is the population of behaviors exhibited by human beings under specific conditions and influenced by culture, values, ethics, rapport, authority, persuasion, coercion, attitudes, emotions, hypnosis, and/or genetics.

<sup>4</sup>The motivation to become involved in an exchange is to satisfy needs.

<sup>5</sup>Famously, as long ago as 1952, research psychologist Wiebe (1952) posed the much-quoted question, “Why can’t you sell brotherhood and rational thinking like you sell soap?” He then argued that the success of mass persuasion, in terms of motivating behavior, is a function of the audience member’s experience with regard to five factors: (i) the force, (ii) the direction, (iii) the mechanism, (iv) the adequacy and compatibility, and (v) the distance.

accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit<sup>6</sup> of individuals, groups, organizations, or society as a whole. Its intent is to create positive social change. It can be applied to promote merit products and services or to make a target audience avoid demerit products and services and thus promote its well-being.

## The Dimensions of Social Marketing

Some consider social marketing to do little but use the principles and practices of generic marketing to achieve noncommercial goals. This is an oversimplification: social marketing involves changing seemingly intractable behaviors in composite environmental, economic, social, political, and technological circumstances with (more often than not) quite limited resources. If the basic objective of corporate marketers is to satisfy shareholders, the bottom line for social marketers is to meet society's desire to improve quality of life.<sup>7</sup> This requires a long-term planning approach that moves beyond the individual end user to groups, organizations, and society, characterized in the figure below. Hence, the desired outcomes of social marketing are usually ambitious: the products are more complex, demand is diverse, the target groups are challenging, the necessary involvement of end users is greater, and competition is more varied. However, like generic marketing, behaviors are always the focus: social marketing is also based on the voluntary (but more difficult)<sup>8</sup> exchange of costs and benefits between two or more parties. To this end, social marketing too proposes a useful framework for planning, a framework that social marketers can associate with other approaches at a time when global, regional, national, and local problems have become more critical. (The other approaches might include advocacy; mobilizing communities; building strategic alliances with public sector agencies, nongovernment organizations, and the private sector<sup>9</sup>; and influencing the media.) Unsurprisingly, besides public health,<sup>10</sup> social

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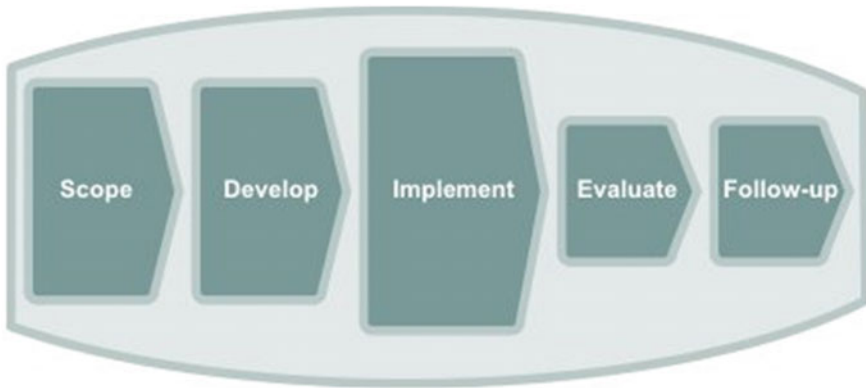
<sup>6</sup>Behavior will change only if perceived benefits outweigh perceived costs.

<sup>7</sup>This does not mean that commercial marketers cannot contribute to achievement of social good.

<sup>8</sup>Social marketing asks target audiences to do something for which social marketers will not always be able to give immediate payback, or show them something in return, most importantly in the near term. In addition, they must usually concentrate on removing barriers to an activity while enhancing the benefits.

<sup>9</sup>Many social marketing issues are so complex that one organization cannot address them alone.

<sup>10</sup>Applications include cholesterol, tobacco prevention, safety, drug abuse, drinking and driving, seatbelt laws, nutrition, obesity, physical activity, HIV/AIDS, immunization, mental health, breast feeding, breast cancer screening, and family planning.



**Fig.** The social marketing process. *Source* Author

marketing is being applied in environmental,<sup>11</sup> economic,<sup>12</sup> and educational<sup>13</sup> fields, among others.

In the United Kingdom, the National Social Marketing Center has worked to clarify the salient features of social marketing. Building on work by Alan Andreasen in the United States, it has drawn social marketing benchmark criteria. They aim to ease understanding of the principles and techniques of social marketing, encourage consistency of approach leading to impact, uphold flexibility and creativity to tailor interventions to different needs, facilitate capture and sharing of transferable learning between interventions, and assist monitoring and evaluation of interventions. Other criteria, critical to successful interventions, might have been included, e.g., strategic planning, partnership and stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, etc. However, those that the National Social Marketing Center promotes are unique to social marketing. The criteria are

*Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.*

—Margaret Mead

- **Orientation** This implies a strong client orientation, with importance attached to understanding where the customer is starting from, e.g., their values,

<sup>11</sup>Instances are pollution, energy conservation, clean air, safer water, recycling, and preservation of forests and national parks.

<sup>12</sup>Areas relate to attracting investors, revitalizing older cities, boosting job skills and training, and civic involvement.

<sup>13</sup>Cases in point are literacy and stay in school.

experiences, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and needs, and the social context in which they live and work.

- **Behavior** This refers to a clear focus on understanding existing behavior and key influences upon it, alongside developing clear behavioral goals. These can be divided into actionable and measurable stages, phased over time.
- **Theory** This connotes the use of behavioral theories to understand human behavior and to build programs around this understanding.
- **Insight** This calls for gaining a deep understanding and insight into what moves and motivates people.
- **Exchange** This rests on the use of the “exchange” concept—understanding what is being expected of people, and the real cost to them.
- **Competition** This hinges on the use of the “competition” concept. This means understanding factors that impact on people and compete for their time.
- **Segmentation** This demands that the audience be clarified using segmentation to target people effectively.
- **Methods Mix** This requires the use of a mix of different interventions or methods to achieve a behavioral goal. When used at the strategic level this is referred to as the intervention mix. When used operationally, it is described as the marketing mix.

## The Importance of Process

The stages of the social marketing process will be familiar to anyone who has been involved in project or program development. However, the National Social Marketing Center highlights in particular the importance of the scoping stage—it drives the entire process. At the scoping stage, the primary concern is to establish clear, actionable, and measurable behavior goals to ensure focused development throughout the rest of the process. The effectiveness of social marketing rests on the demonstration of direct impact on behavior; it is this feature that sets social marketing distinctly apart from communication or awareness-raising approaches (where the main focus is on highlighting information and helping people understand it). The aim of the scoping part of the process is to define the objectives of the intervention and what the stakeholders want to achieve. This requires close engagement and much insight. At this stage, social marketers attempt to understand what moves and motivates the end users to determine how the behavioral goals might be reached. Referring to generic marketing, it might be useful to consider this stage as that when the product (or service) is defined.

The complexity of marketing a societal behavioral change requires that the process of social marketing be well structured. Yet, there may have been insufficient discussion of a step-by-step methodology for the social marketing process in the literature. The principal stages followed in public health applications in the United States are initial planning, formative research, strategy development, program development and pretesting of material and nonmaterial interventions,

implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The core marketing principles, the four Ps, are at the heart of this process because they are used at the initial planning stage.

## **Social Marketing for a Sustainable Future**

Given the roots they share, both generic and social marketing have seen a move to relational capital and relationship marketing, away from transactional thinking. Somewhat belatedly, the private sector came to realize that it is easier, and more profitable, to retain clients than to continually attract new customers. Social marketing adopted that thinking earlier simply because it must embrace long-term strategic approaches. Indeed, the inescapable need for long-term thinking in social marketing and the related development of appropriate principles and techniques now position it advantageously in the quickening fight against global, regional, national, and local problems.

### **Box 1: Case Study: Tonle Sap Environmental Management—Formulating and Implementing a National Environmental Education and Awareness Campaign**

Sustainable management and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity are a priority for Cambodia, which relies heavily on land, water, and biotic resources and is on the verge of rapid urban, industrial, and agricultural development. In such cases, environmental policies should be fitted to the conditions and traditions of the country. Implementation will not be successful without the active participation of all citizens, especially those who depend on natural resources.

When Cambodia nominated in 1996 the Tonle Sap for designation by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization as a biosphere reserve, the government recognized that the site should respond to the conservation, development, and logistic functions of a biosphere reserve and that education and public awareness should be given importance. At the national level, information on conservation and sustainable use, as practiced in biosphere reserves, should be included in school programs and teaching manuals and in media efforts. At the local level, involvement of local communities should be encouraged, information for visitors should be produced, and environmental education centers should be promoted.

Since its creation in 1993, the Ministry of Environment has worked toward such ends. As a result, an Interministerial Steering Committee for Environmental Education was established that year with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme's Environmental Technical Assistance Project. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization was associated with related environmental education activities,

particularly with developing environmental education materials for school curricula and producing teacher guides for primary and secondary schools. A special program for educating monks was also put in place. However, many of these activities were interrupted when the Environmental Technical Assistance Project ended in 1998. Considering the importance of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve and the severity of the threats against it, it is urgent that progress in environmental education and awareness continue and that a national campaign be mounted in support. This would also help Cambodia meet obligations under the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity that stress the importance of education and public awareness on biodiversity.

The goal of the project is sustainable management and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity in the Tonle Sap basin. The objective that formulation and implementation of a national environmental education and awareness campaign will help accomplish is strengthened natural resource management coordination and planning for the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve, particularly by establishing a coordination framework and information dissemination mechanisms. The outputs needed to formulate and implement the campaign are as follows: (i) publicizing the Tonle Sap's environmental importance, (ii) integrating concern for natural resources, and (iii) developing formal and nonformal environmental education. These outputs will be defined by the target audience, i.e., the general public and the press, decision makers, schoolchildren (at primary and secondary levels), university students, and communities living in the Tonle Sap region.

*Source* Extracted from ADB (2002). See also Live & Learn Environmental Education (2005, 2006a, b, c).

## **Box 2: Case Study: Tonle Sap Sustainable Livelihoods—Educating for Protection of Natural Resources**

In Cambodia, decentralization and deconcentration have boosted local autonomy and participation in national development. Accordingly, the structures supporting this effort—at central, provincial, district, and commune levels—have received considerable assistance. But, given their short history, the impact on improved livelihoods, though encouraging, has been modest: there remains a need to strengthen institutions and processes at all levels. This includes improving cross-sectoral linkages in development planning, building skills for community-driven development, and raising awareness of the need to protect natural resources. Component 3 of the Project plans to build skills and awareness for sustainable livelihoods.

Specifically, to help raise awareness of the need to protect natural resources, the Project will (i) assemble educational materials on natural resource management, including those developed under component 3 of the

ADB-assisted Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project; (ii) hold environmental awareness forums for staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Women's Affairs, their provincial departments, and commune leaders; (iii) prioritize villages according to their potential impact on resource extraction; (iv) assemble, train, and equip a mobile training team to extend environmental awareness in priority villages; (v) deliver the environmental awareness program; and (vi) conduct monitoring and evaluation. The activities will build on achievements under component 1 of the Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project, according to the principles developed under an ADB-assisted pilot and demonstration activity conducted in 2004.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>See ADB (2004). See also Live & Learn Environmental Education (2004, 2006d, 2007).

*Source* Extracted from ADB (2005).

*A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

—Margaret Mead

Kotler and Lee (2009) contributed to expand the traditional scope of social marketing by considering global poverty, 90% of which is found in developing countries,<sup>14</sup> from the viewpoint of the marketer. They examined how marketing perspectives might drive poverty solutions that work by (i) segmenting the poverty marketplace (who are the potential market segments for our efforts?); (ii) evaluating and choosing target market priorities (who should we focus on first or most?); (iii) determining desired behavior changes (what do we want them to do?); (iv) understanding barriers, benefits, and the competition for change (what do they think of the idea?); and (v) developing a desired positioning and strategic marketing mix (what do they need to do this?). They stressed the need to ensure an integrated approach by developing a social marketing plan and elucidating the distinct roles of

<sup>14</sup>Applying social marketing principles and techniques in developing countries is not new. Poverty is affected by behavioral choices, and behavior is influenced by the creation, communication, and delivery of products and services that modulate it. Therefore, from the 1980s organizations such as the World Bank started to use the term “social marketing” and have continued to promote interest in it. However, Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee’s book is a valuable addition to the toolbox of development aid. It describes and illustrates with actual cases the major steps in planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and controlling social marketing programs for poverty reduction; this level of analysis had been missing in all the previous work on helping the poor.



the public sector, nongovernment organizations, and the private sector in poverty reduction.

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## Further Reading

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