'WHY SHOULD I CARE?' - ADDING PASSION TO SOCIAL MARKETING

George Bell, School of Business, Swinburne University of Technology, PO Box 218, Hawthorn, Vic 3122, Australia, +61 3 9214 8414, gbell@swin.edu.au

Judy Rex, School of Business, Swinburne University of Technology, PO Box 218, Hawthorn, Vic 3122, Australia, +61 3 9214 8055, jrex@swin.edu.au

ABSTRACT

If commercial marketing’s bottom line is “what’s in it for me?” then possibly social marketing’s line is “what is in the community’s best interest”? Social marketing literature documents instrumental approach used when trying to overlay the commercial marketing model onto social organisations. Simplistically the building blocks of marketing - place, price, promotion, and product that are fundamental to commercial business also apply to non-profits. Non-profits, however, have an extra ‘p’ that can give them an advantage commercial enterprises cannot generally claim: we call it ‘Passion’. This paper contends that Passion is a critical variable that is not fully accounted for in the literature.

PASSION

What then is passion, and how do we manage it? The Oxford English Dictionary has 11 meanings for the word passion. The tenth meaning is given as “An eager outreaching of the self towards something; an overmastering zeal or enthusiasm for a special object; a vehement predilection.” Passion can be observed in football teams, religious orders, and soldiers at the front, as well as in globalisation protesters. These rational actors demonstrate that passion can have different motives and objectives but they are generally engaged for the welfare of the group rather than the individual. It is clear that passion is not a weak motivator relying on just altruism. It is a value driven motivator. Researchers contend that it can be managed. These factors suggest that successful non-profit organisations are a good place to see how the passion Zeitgeist can be harnessed. Passion becomes an intangible nutrient that helps social marketing organisations to function and survive.

SOURCES OF PASSION

Civil society relies upon the generation of social capital. These are the underlying assumptions of social capital theory, which allow a society to function and progress. Non-profit organisations can use social marketing to achieve their community objectives. The groupings identify the sources of much of the goodwill that can be found in social organisations.

Empowered People - Employees/Volunteers. These individuals feel self-empowered because they are passionate about what they do with their discretionary or paid time. Partnerships/Alliances. Commercial organisations can form profitable and socially responsible partnerships with social marketing organisations. Organisations. Passion can be an organisational or a personal value. Critics. Individuals both inside and outside the social marketing organisation can manifest Criticism can be levelled at non-profit organisations for several alleged weaknesses: poor
performance, patronising behaviour, or for driving an agenda that is at odds with the objectives of critic.

PASSION DRIVERS

Adkins [1] thinks people associate with causes because some of these organisations are thought o:
good to work for, generating pride, cool or trendy. Commercial enterprises don’t deliver the same f:
good factors. The fact that there are so many volunteers in numerous organisations giving up their t:
is part of the social capital that characterises a mature civil society. This demonstrates some of
essential drivers for passion in social marketing organisations.

Strategy, mission, and values alignment. People tend to join organisations with which they have sc
affinity. It is important for non-profit organisations to articulate their mission, vision and val:
Greenpeace for example, relies upon its reputation for good science and direct action to attract fund
and volunteers. A social marketing organisation that clearly articulates its objectives allows
employees and volunteers to agree with or dispute the organisation's vision. Supporting that vis
through action then becomes a critical factor in retaining volunteers and staff.

Leadership. Channer and Hope [2] observe that while leaders have a strong rational bias, particu:
under stress, they also have room for the emotional reactions of themselves and others. They s:
strong congruence between behaviour, values and emotions – and are focused on “being human”. T:
are also passionately committed to the future of the organisation they lead, which allowed them to
extraordinary things.

Passion without commitment and understanding pretty soon dissipates into so much froth and bubl
Successful passion means more than defending what has always been done, or a belief in the inalien:
right of the organisation to hold a strong view because “it is a good thing”. Rather it is the passion
leadership, which is energetic, puts others before self, overcomes huge odds, and is prepared to go
extra mile. Passion is the partner to rationality and process – all three are necessary but perhaps
greatest of these is passion.

Personal connection. Individuals choose to work for organisations in which they find a group
individual for whom they have some respect and wish to emulate. This can blend social and wc
related motivations. One of the benefits that employees and volunteers obtain from joining a so
marketing organisation is the opportunity to learn new skills and engage with his colleagues. When
organisation fails to provide this opportunity, individuals become restless and will probably leave.

Technology. The world of online communications opens limitless horizons for non-profits that
willing to experiment and learn from others. It can help with organisational efficiency and sustainab:
as well as reaching core goals such as advocacy or informing. The stages of online communication:
adopted incrementally, lead an organisation towards more openness and transparency to members, s
also towards greater resilience through improved member feedback and understanding of inte
operations. There are many challenges along the way, in the areas of organisational change, planni
technology integration and continual reflection on how well the organisation is meeting members’ ne
Many of the resources for online non-profits provided in this report are mostly available online, and

can offer some comfort to groups overwhelmed by the scope and complexity of this new world.

HARNESSING PASSION

There are five ways to harness passion:

- Recognition A social marketing organisation should provide all employees and volunteers v
  regular and meaningful forums, which recognises their efforts. Internal newsletters, online c
  rooms and simply a pat on the back will help an organisation recognise its employees.
• **Reward** Social marketing organisations rarely have large budgets. Rewarding volunteers sometimes can mean nothing more than public thanks and support. Following the Sydney Olympics the volunteers were rewarded with a ticker-tape parade. The volunteers from the New South Wales State Emergency Services (SES) were rewarded for their efforts in re-roofing 15,000 houses in the 1999 Sydney Hailstorm by a free concert given by the Sydney City Council and public expressions of thanks from the NSW Government.

• **Respect.** The social marketing organisation should treat all volunteers with respect. Volunteers and employees who believe they are not being respected can become toxic and tend to undermine the effectiveness of the organisation.

• **Remuneration.** Managing unpaid staff can be difficult. What can you incentivise or punish them with? Social marketing organisations with budgets should where possible, pay non-commercial rates of pay.

• **Repeat.** Burnout contributes to turnover in volunteer organisations. It is only possible to maintain a high level of engagement for a short time. Harnessing passion can postpone burnout. Periodically it is necessary to revisit the values, vision and processes to reinvigorate the passion and recognise, reward, and demonstrate respect for all people engaged in the process.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In this paper we contend that social marketing is still developing and maturing beyond the simple application of the four P’s. We suggest that social marketing organisations can become more effective in their work, by considering the passion of their volunteers as a variable that can be managed, and the proper harnessing of the passion can be a Key Success Factor (KSF) in sustaining the long-term viability of the organisation. Increasingly, non-profits are demonstrating the benefits of managing passion. This form of volunteer and staff loyalty cannot be bought by the business sector. The addition of social ‘passion’ to the other four Ps of the marketing mix adds an extra dimension that should work in the non-profits’ favour.

The researchers have used a combination of action research and grounded theory in making an attempt at redefining and providing a model for social marketing using the additional variable of passion. We believe this narrative approach is a strength rather than a limitation. However, this is not the end of the debate we hope that it is rather the beginning of a new one. It is believed the concept of passion as the fifth P of social marketing has validity. The researchers have not provided an empirically rigorous analysis however it is believed that this paper can provide the catalyst for further confirmatory research.

**REFERENCES**


A full set of references is available on request.