Social marketing utilizes commercial marketing techniques (including a consumer orientation, audience segmentation, and pre-testing messages and materials) as a way to influence voluntary behavior change. This behavior change always has the objective of benefiting the individual or society in some way, making it fundamentally different from the objective of most commercial marketing (Andreason 1995). True social marketing campaigns are based on scientific research and analysis that are used to guide each component of a carefully designed behavior change intervention. The development of effective social marketing campaigns continually refers back to the data gathered on audience characteristics, their needs and wants, and the barriers they face to change.

Besides being oriented to the consumer, social marketing uses the “4Ps” concept to develop the steps needed for a successful campaign (Bryant et al. 2000). The “Ps” stand for product, price, place and promotion:

- **Product** - the new behavior being promoted in contrast to current behavior patterns;
- **Price** - the identified social, emotional and monetary costs that will be exchanged for some benefit offered by the social marketer;
- **Place** - where the exchange takes place or where the target behavior is practiced;
- **Promotion** - the activities used to facilitate the exchange including promotional materials, advertising, and spokespersons.

The promotional component is often the most visible representation of a social marketing campaign, but is not the most important one. A campaign that develops materials without a solid foundation of consumer research and a commitment to reducing the barriers they face to change is social advertising, not social marketing (Andreason 1995).

When social marketing techniques are combined with the efforts of a community (defined as a collection of individuals who share common geography, experiences or objectives), its power for change is greatly increased. Behavior change at the community level is more effective because it has wider reach, greater resources for removing structural barriers to change and it offers sustainability through on-going support for the members of the community (Mackenzie-Mohr and Smith 1999). Community-based interventions are effective for changes in environmental or conservation behavior because the benefits are often seen as accruing to the whole society and not just the individual. Even health interventions that focus on individual behavior change find greater success when the whole community participates. Through the community, knowledge is disseminated, new norms are established and groups are empowered by their success (Israel et al 1994).

The most important role for the community is to provide their input into the design of behavior change interventions, making them more relevant to their lives and easier to adopt by individuals (Bryant et al 2000). Community partners help conduct social marketing research such as surveys, focus groups and participant observation. Their knowledge and experience provide a continual feedback loop to validate
and interpret research findings. The community partners can identify segments of an audience and often represent them through their own thoughts and actions. This is an essential component of the social marketing approach:

“Social marketers recognize that, to have maximum social effectiveness in a world of very limited budgets, one must focus on changing groups of consumers-not individuals and not mass markets, but carefully selected segments.” (Andreason 1995:12)

Blending the methods and objectives of social marketing with the strength of community partners is an ideal approach for changing the conservation behavior of homeowners and their associations, real estate developers and the landscaping industry. By facilitating the participation of all of these groups into a working partnership and getting them to think like social marketers, they can remove barriers, provide incentives and behavior prompts and disseminate knowledge about water conservation and safe pesticide and fertilizer use.

References


