

# Tell Your Story Well: Communicating Evaluation Data and Outcomes for Sustainability

State/Tribal/Adolescents at Risk Suicide Prevention  
Grantee

Technical Assistance Meeting

December 10-12, 2007

Portland, Oregon

## Session Objectives

- Review core concepts of communications to get into a “marketing mindset.”
- Understand the very different roles of communications and evaluation—and how they can align to support sustainability.
- Learn how to take data and tell your initiative’s story in ways that compel audience support.

## What is Sustainability?

- The benchmark for your success.
- Can mean sustaining existing programs and services, but...
- For most successful initiatives, means shifting focus from sustaining **programs** to sustaining **functions**.
  - Doesn't matter who is providing services, as long as they're still being provided!
  - May mean making tough choices—not everything can be sustained!

## Shifting Focus to Sustainability

- Starts with creating a basic plan for sustainability.
  - What do you and your partners want to sustain or believe can be sustained?
  - What functions in your plan are already covered?
  - Where are there gaps in your plan?

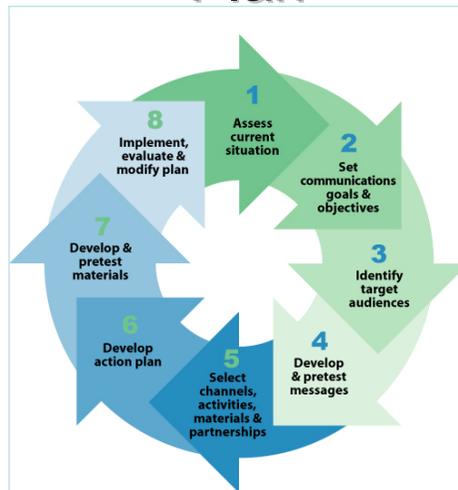
## Communications Can Help

- Reach those audiences who can step in to help fill gaps in your sustainability plan
  - Different from those audiences who use your services
- Improve the likelihood of “getting to yes” with partners, supporters

## Plan Your Communications Efforts

- Working with partners to create a communications plan can:
  - Provide a strategic “road map” to keep you on task
  - Support your plans for sustainability
  - Provide the most bang for your limited time/money
  - Increase buy-in and commitment from partners

# Create A Communications Plan



## First - Deepen Existing Partnerships

- Invite partner feedback on the initiative's progress and their role in it.
- Invite meaningful participation in strategic planning efforts.
- Acknowledge partner support publicly.
- How do you and your partners perceive their roles shifting as the initiative moves towards sustainability?

## Who Still Needs to be at the Table?

- Develop new partners for sustainability
  - Who else needs to be at the table to sustain key functions of your initiative?
  - What are your common goals, mission?
  - How would partnership with your initiative be of benefit *to them*?

## Communications for Sustainability

- Engages new and existing partners; persuades them of the value of support.
  - Statewide Suicide Prevention Coalitions
  - Policy makers—local to national level
  - Community leaders/opinion makers
  - Business leaders
  - Non-profit & foundation leaders
  - Faith-based community
  - School Districts and More...

## It's All About THEM!

- Your target audiences are always at the forefront of your communications.
  - Learn as much as possible about an audience before creating materials and messaging.
  - Create messaging and materials that matter to them.
  - Respect and respond to their needs, values, and beliefs.
  - Craft messages based on what they are able to hear—not necessarily what you think they should hear.

## The Typical Approach (a.k.a. “The Curse of Knowledge”)

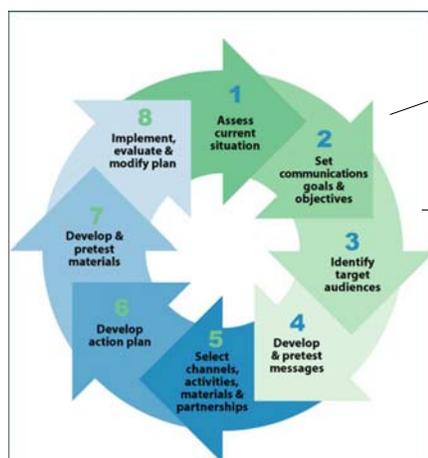
- “Experts” tell us what to do because “they know what’s best.”
- Those same experts are baffled when we:
  - Don’t support their programs
  - Throw away their brochures
  - Ignore their advice
- Asking, “*What’s WRONG with THEM?!*”

## A Better Approach

- Instead of asking, “What’s *WRONG* with *THEM?*” ask:
  - What’s wrong with what we’re offering?
  - What’s wrong with our message and the way we delivered it?
  - What do we need to offer to offset their costs?
  - What would make us more attractive than the competition?
- These questions focus on your target

When approaching partners for support, focus on your shared mission, vision, or goals.

## Planning Your Communications



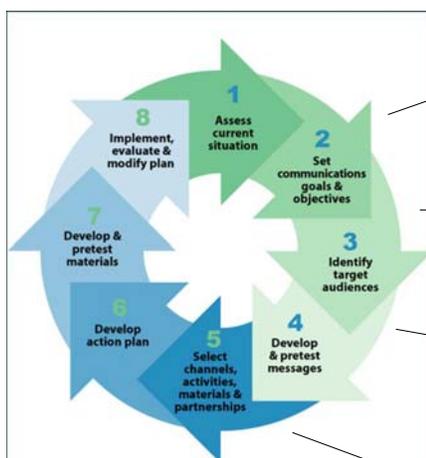
Key functions of your initiative you want to see sustained.

Potential sources of support for your goals: What do you know about them? What do you still need to learn?

## If It's All About THEM - who are they?

- Let's identify some key target audiences
  - Who do we need to reach?
    - Do we need to further segment our audiences?
  - What do we know about them?
  - How will we find out more?

## Planning Your Communications



Key functions of your initiative you want to see sustained.

Potential sources of support for your goals: What do you know about them? What do you still need to learn?

Frame your messages: Tell your story in a way that resonates with your audiences.

Deliver those messages in a way that compels your audiences to take action.

# Communications + Data/Outcomes = SUSTAINABILITY

- Compelling presentation of outcomes is key to sustainability.
  - Requires meeting your audiences “where they are.”
  - Is more than facts—it’s memorable!
- Evaluation collects and assesses information; communications frames and presents it.

Let’s look at the difference between the “evaluation mindset” and the “marketing mindset.”

## Evaluators Are From Mars

Show me the numbers. ←

Deep appreciation for  
absolutes; risk-averse. ←

No fear of lengthy,  
complex, and analytical  
reports and abstracts. ←

Time takes time—and that’s what  
accurate evaluations need.

Process-oriented. The journey may  
be more important than the goal.

It’s a  
complex  
world worthy  
of deep  
analysis.



MARS

# Communicators Are From Venus



→ It's all about the audience.

→ Generalities are okay; don't mind taking a risk.

→ Want to see data communicated simply and easily. No jargon, please!

The world is full of AMAZING stories waiting to be told!!!

→ Love to talk about successes and challenges.

→ Goal oriented: Can we see RESULTS?



# Can Mars and Venus Align?



*What's the story with us? We need to TALK....*

**TALK?!?**  
There's nothing to talk about—at least not until I can look at those survey results....



## Mars and Venus CAN Align



*We can do it for the CHILDREN!*

- Start working together early; communicate regularly; value each others' contributions.
- Monitor and share key information to refine:
  - Data collection
  - Communications

*Yes! The CHILDREN!*



## Mars and Venus Think About the Future

- Who needs to be at the table to sustain your initiative?
  - Current partners
  - Potential new partners
- What information do they need to hear?
  - Hard data
  - Anecdotal evidence
  - Combination
- How do you present that information?

## Mars and Venus Need To Take Inventory

- What types of data do you have?
  - Quantitative Data/Qualitative Data
  - Descriptive Data/Outcome Data
- Where does your data come from?
- What's the quality of your data?
- What message does the data convey?



**My life's work....  
Stunning, isn't it?**

**My head is spinning....**



## Mars and Venus Go Public

- Consider your target audiences and what they'll want to hear.
  - Work together to assess existing data.
  - Identify gaps and determine how to fill them.



**Your father Zeus will be  
impressed by the number of  
sit-ups I can do!**

**Not at all. But he WILL care how  
much money you make.  
Got that data, honey??**



## Mars and Venus Learn To Listen

- Solicit input from partners, stakeholders. Listen to their desired outcomes. For example:
  - Juvenile justice wants fewer arrests, less severe charges.
  - Local business wants less loitering between 3-6 p.m.
  - School district wants better attendance to garner more State/Federal money.



*Can you help me with this?*

*Sure, but I say we take a break first.*



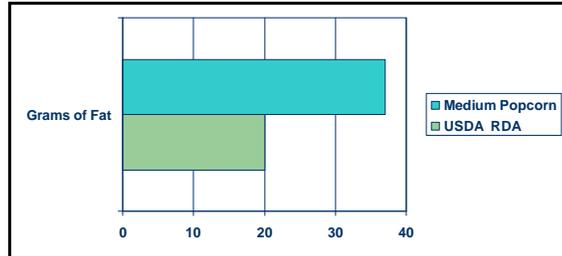
## Mars and Venus Order a Medium Popcorn at the Movies

- DATA Reports:
  - The average “medium” popcorn contains 37 grams of saturated fat.
  - USDA recommends no more than 20 grams/day of saturated fat.
- The COMMUNICATIONS challenge:
  - Reduce consumption of movie theater popcorn.

**Fairly dry statistics.... Perhaps we need to illustrate this differently to reach our goal...**

From the Center for Science in the Public Interest

# Mars and Venus Order a Medium Popcorn at the Movies



**A bar chart for the AGES!**

**It's good, but mind if I try something else?**



From the Center for Science in the Public Interest

# Mars and Venus Order a Medium Popcorn at the Movies



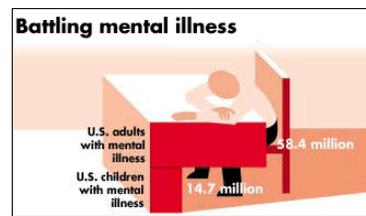
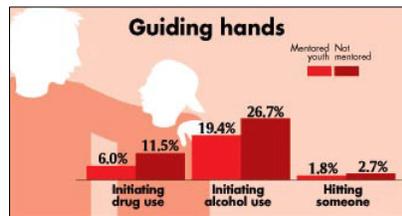
**WHOA! That's AWFUL!**

**Now you've got it!**



From the Center for Science in the Public Interest

# Mars and Venus Read the Paper



USA Today "Snapshots"

# Make Your Story Stick

- Think "SUCCES"s:
  - Simplicity
  - Unexpectedness
  - Concreteness
  - Credibility
  - Emotions
  - Stories

I can't tell if this is going to be easy... or hard!



Just follow my lead—I've got this part covered.



From *Made to Stick* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath

## A “Sticky” SUCCESSful Idea

*“We will put a man on the moon and return him safely by the end of the decade.”*

*--President John Fitzgerald Kennedy*



**Simple:** No mistaking what those words mean.

**Unexpected:** Took the country by surprise.

**Concrete:** We’d meet this goal or we wouldn’t—no in-between.

**Credible:** Delivered by Nation’s leader.

**Emotional:** Worked on our collective belief: We could achieve anything.

**Story:** We act on the idea: Inspiring.

## Mars, Venus, and Sustaining Your Programs



*Who else needs to be at the table to meet our goals?*



*Let’s audit partners, stakeholders, community.*



*Let’s assess our data...*

*... and fill in any gaps stakeholders will need.*

*Then tell a persuasive story that will...*

*...compel our target audiences to do it for the CHILDREN!*



## Safe Schools/Healthy Students Case Study: Springfield, MO

- GOAL: Garner State funding through the legislative process to support their school-based prevention program.
- COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY:
  - Build on established relationship with State representative—already a “champion.”
  - Education campaign to State legislators leading to consideration by MO Senate Appropriations Committee.
  - Consult with director of State Dept. of Mental Health.
  - Supplement with communications materials presenting hard data matching target audience values: ***“You asked for effective programs. This one delivers!”***

## Safe Schools/Healthy Students Case Study: Springfield, MO

***Springfield’s “champions” presented more than the site’s excellent outcome data in their education campaign. They framed their story by alerting legislators to reality: A successful program is about to disappear.***

**Simple:** “You asked for effective programs. This one delivers.”

**Unexpected:** Legislators were unaware of the problem—and this solution.

**Concrete:** 49% less substance abuse; 38% fewer problem behaviors.

**Credible:** Their best champion was a legislator.

**Emotional:** Relied heavily on personal contacts to put a human face on data.

**Story:** “We need a hero to come to our rescue and save a worthy program.”

## GLSMA Case Study: Fort Peck Reservation, MT

- GOALS:
  - Intervene in immediate crisis (adolescent suicide pact)
  - Garner school system/community support for suicide prevention.
- COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY:
  - Intervene with the support of school council members, tribal leaders, law enforcement and emergency responders to immediately prevent additional suicide deaths.
  - Use the story of the suicide pact to underline that suicide can happen in the community and to show that suicides can be prevented to spur community support for prevention program
  - Implement gatekeeper trainings, create response protocols, improve available resources to assist students in crisis

## GLSMA Case Study: Fort Peck Reservation, MT

*Thanks to the quick response to a serious situation, the Fort Peck community and its leaders were mobilized to support suicide prevention efforts. The ongoing campaign and story it tells of lives saved will help sustain commitment after funding ends.*

**Simple:** Once we know there's a problem, there are ways we can prevent suicide.

**Unexpected:** Community had not perceived a problem (3.2/10 on readiness scale).

**Concrete:** Adolescents created a suicide pact, one attempted, and one died by suicide.

**Credible:** Campaign involves several tribal council members, IHS providers

**Emotional:** The story of the children involved in the pact is personal, compelling.

**Story:** When we act to prevent suicide, we ALL have more hope for our community's future.

## Safe Schools/Healthy Students Case Study : Kyrene, AZ

- GOAL: Engage support from untapped business community to sustain key functions.
- COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY:
  - Research likely business partners with shared missions, a history of community support.
  - Cull data/stories relevant to each potential partner's mission.
  - Find out who-knows-who: Meet with businesses, tell the story, supplement with appropriate leave-behind materials.
  - Frame the message and the “ask” around conviction: We need to make Kyrene “The Best of the Best.”

## Safe Schools/Healthy Students Case Study : Kyrene, AZ

***By persuading them to help SS/HS initiative's mission to keep Kyrene “The Best of the Best,” businesses of all sizes jumped on board and, in large measure, sustain the initiative.***

**Simple:** “The Best of the Best.”

**Unexpected:** The district hadn't asked for support from businesses before.

**Concrete:** Initiative promised—then delivered--concrete, meaningful ways to say “Thanks.” Businesses saw a return on investment, if even a simple event program mention.

**Credible:** Delivered by trusted individuals in the community.

**Emotional:** Regularly integrated human stories benefiting from the initiative.

**Story:** “We are proud of helping make our community The Best of the Best.”

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