

WHY IS COMMUNICATION SO SPECIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

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ABSTRACT

This paper present the role and interaction between communication and Sustainable Development, strengthening in the same time that communication it is a key factor to begin and keep a proper Sustainable Development strategy. Thus, communication can mainly be used for: information exchange, identifying a consensus around some specific issues; supporting the accomplishment of the projects objectives, helping to identify and define the objectives.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, communication, social marketing, negotiation, education

1. Introduction

To establish a strategy means to establish objectives, to configure and identify the means of achieving these, evidence-based approaches, a clear vision, priorities, directions, and tactics. For sustainable development the strategy imposes a comprehensive understanding of the concept and of its implications, but not necessarily a comprehensive set of specific actions. The communication strategy is more than dissemination of information, therefore a request for participation of stakeholders by providing opportunities. This provides a communication often influenced by human factors, sociology, psychology, culture, behaviour and politics; and can help the achievement of the consensus and the creation of partnerships regarding the Development Agenda.

Internal factors include human characteristics, such as norms and values, attitudes and behaviours, emotions and beliefs, culture and social relationships. External factors include materials, such as posters or messaging channels, as well as mass media, prints, broadcasts, new communication technologies, street theatre, group communication, materials that bring the message to the target audience.

The communication strategy for sustainable development is special because of the:

- complexity of sustainable development as a science that combines economical, legal, business management, political, sociological, psychological information.
- agreements/disagreements among experts regarding the interactions between the

domains listed above, and the explanations of those often large technical dimensions of the sustainable development

- personal impact, on emotional and spiritual level, triggered by the sustainable development.
- specific risk elements of the sustainable development, especially between the incontrollable passive and the volunteer active.

2. The Development of a Communication Strategy

The communication strategy of sustainable development can:

- convince the decision makers of a country to adopt new policies and to provide support in the same time.
- strengthen leadership's, NGO's, community-based organization's capabilities for a better economical, ecological and social management.
- develop partnerships among governments, local communities, NGOs in order to encourage people to work together for change.
- motivate people to adopt cleaner production technologies.
- sensitize in the direction of the problems linked with the sustainable development.
- accelerate and improve people's behaviour in adopting responsible actions.
- persuade and help people to change their behaviour.

- generate enthusiasm in the community for behavioural changes on community level.

Sustainable development can be successfully communicated by recognizing specific elements of public interest, by using opportunities to demonstrate connections between the problems that matter to people, but also to the economy or to the environment, presenting positive sides and emphasizing opportunities, ideas and innovations that are positive for the future, through a clean environment, which means health, bio agriculture, thrifty and non-polluting homes and transport, by using good communication practices (explaining people the aspects that concern them, exemplifying with real stories, not just presenting the abstract “recommendations”, using direct language).

Media channels are usually raised to communicate towards laymen. Communication with the audience can be divided in the following:

- activities of public relations: in short terms, usually made through mass-media and commercials, communication being mainly achieved in a single direction;
- market research: is a way to communicate from the opposite side; from the audience;
- polls: these can develop an independent vision, and can be a very strong instrument in formulating strategies;
- research by telephone: calling a toll free number can encourage the audience’s participation, observations formulated can be an extra force in planning the strategies;
- activities for public awareness: consultation with various groups in the process of strategy can have an impact of medium term on traditional mass-media by the participation of the government, of NGOs, in debates concerning sustainable development, and learning information about each aspect regarding the results;
- public participation: is longish enough and depends on formal and informal stimulants, on education and professional training, practice results, mass-media.

Mass-media has a crucial role in the policy across the entire life cycle of the project. It is the essential feature in involving the actors responsible for each stage, each actor having different perceptions, own interests. Thus, the roles of communication are the following:

- Recognition (analyzing views, polls, NGO categories, groups, and by regular meetings with interested groups, the necessity of a sustainable development strategy can be identified and recognized);
- Control (by acquired knowledge, verifying attitudes by polls, we can integrate the communication strategy in the tool mix of

the strategy, by communicating with everyone involved);

- Solution (communication is independent and in the same time it is complementary to laws, incentives in a qualitative research);
- Maintaining control (information are regularly reported, monitoring any modification or change of attitude).

3. The Five Strategic Branches of Communication Strategy for Sustainable Development

3.1. Communication Concerning Development and Environment

Communication helps stakeholders to change directions on sustainable practices. In combination with other instruments, as economic incentives, laws and regulations or sectoral planning, communication about the way in which development affects the environment is extremely important. Problems have to be identified, by setting a hierarchy of objectives, formulating management policy without communication deficiencies, because otherwise one might see but the negative side of things, refusing to understand the real reasons for constructive development. Putting on agenda, in a relevant way for different categories of audience, is a prior condition for consensus and change. Messages and the selection of the appropriate transmission channel are particularly important for a strategic success. A strategic approach to planning has to be applied in the target audience’s segmentation, in the selection of transmission channels and in determining messages, for achieving a maximum result with minimal efforts. Procedures will be used to develop a system of information, including monitoring and surveillance.

Therefore, strategic communication inventions have to be systematic and planned, to have as purpose the increasing of knowledge and the changing of the target audience’s attitudes and practices, in order to protect the environment beyond the goal to develop above all costs. Planning has to include, among the strategy planning and the management planning, the process of a developed communication strategy. The plan can be divided in two: the process of strategy development (“what to do”) and the process of management planning (“how to do it”). Consequently, when a plan for a strategy is completed, it has to be put in practice, next, at this stage, communication’s task intervene. Likewise, messages have to be broadcasted on different media channels, but with consideration to the assumption of mobilization responsibility, that eventually, have to bring changes into the harming practices over the environment.

3.2. Social Marketing

Social marketing is one of the most common approaches for corporate campaigns. Social behavior has gone through distinct phases: awareness of interest, evaluation, adoption or rejection. Mass-media has an important role in the phase of awareness and interest, on the other hand

impersonal communication is important when it comes to evaluation, process and adoption or rejection. Social marketing puts in practice commercial marketing techniques to promote pro-social behaviour, and communication imposes in the ways highlighted below:

People	Communication Intervention
Ignorant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness • recommending a solution
Aware, interested, with knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying the barriers and the benefits perceived in the change of behaviour • providing useful information
Motivated to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using community groups for counselling and motivation • providing information regarding proper usage
Trying the new behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging further use, showing the benefits by reducing the barriers and solving the encountered problems • the development of new skills when studying behaviour • social service
Supporting the new behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recalling the new behaviours benefits • supporting the new behaviour • social service

Table 1. Marketing techniques [1]

3.3. Ecological and Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education refers to a certain type of learning concerning social, economical or ecological environment, outside school. Education is essential for promoting sustainable development and improvement of people's ability to sense problems concerning development. Furthermore, education is essential for environmental and ethical awareness, for values and attitudes, or for the skills that are in concordance with sustainable development behaviour and decision making. Awareness and sensitiveness take into account a huge variety of experiences concerning the basic understandings of environmental problems and those associated with these.

Education has to trigger a set of values and feelings of concerns for the environment, motivations for being an active part in protecting the environment. The principles of an effective communication are reflected in a process of public-private dialogue, by which people define themselves in relation with the environment, and give a proof of tolerance, self-determination, equity, social justice.

Environmental education is a mission oriented towards presenting information in order to provide added value and to determine relevant and

responsible measures to take real shape. The aim of non-formal education is to help "students" learn the ability to collect and analyze information, to take the right decisions and to fully participate in civil life. Instilling knowledge about the environment thus creates positive attitudes towards it, as well as a feeling of responsibility. Programs that help to discover information and develop skills, to shift information into significant practices, have to be developed and implemented. Engineers, architects, business leaders, lawyers, project managers, society's decision makers all have to understand the way in which sustainable development's principles and concepts can be found in everyday life, either for building a house, or for a water treatment, urban development, automobile manufacturing.

3.4. The Mobilization of Civil Society

Sustainable development related interventions are often initiated by organizations and decision makers of a community. Well-intentioned, these projects determine a kind of mass manipulation by determining the participation of some individuals in these actions. These kinds of initiatives should rather concentrate more on listening the masses, than on determining them to do what is ordered. Thus, communication begins by

learning how to listen experiences, being attentive to knowledge and hopes.

Listening requires skills and respect, and can even mean an increased attention to anecdotes, history, symbols, artists of the moment, music and poetry, traditional theatre, puppets. Communication is correlated with the understanding of vertical patterns of communication (addresser-media-receiver) and with related services. Except, nothing works without changing practice, and this cannot be done without social actions, interpersonal and group help. When we talk about the mobilization of the civil society, we also talk about the power of bargaining through communication, social and political skills. Thus, an integrated approach of community communication for sustainable development can be useful, but for people to participate, planners need to find pleasant devices, not a strategy of persuasion and power.

Communication, with residents and interested parties, can help to identify new ways to increase the number of the attendant people or groups. Sustainable development's complex problems, specific to a town, can draw in people who can improve the programme, offer credibility by strengthening their ability of having similar actions in the future.

3.5. Conflict and Negotiation Management

Conflict management is designed as an alternative policy instrument that creates consensus and converges conflict situations into decision makings. An efficient communication, the promotion of dialogue can determine a deep reflection, a participatory analysis before making decisions or planning some actions that make a change. When communication is troubled and the implicated parties do not communicate in a constructive way, the following situations can emerge:

- communication is troubled by prejudices, opposite political attitudes or by problems in the relationships of the implicated parties
- actors seem to have incompatible positions and interests
- prior communication processes did not clarify the actors' needs, or they even complicated the situation
- the existence of an unbalanced power, that obstructions the opened communication and the encountering of a consensus
- not all relevant actors can be involved in the communication process.

In these cases, sustainable development uses mediation procedures, conciliation or arbitration, identifying the specific advantages for each

member of the conflict. The existence of a mediator can, thus, make possible the communication of procedural suggestions for the parties to voluntarily reach an acceptable agreement. Mediators, to suggest acceptable options to each part, often work individually with the parties. Hence, with procedural assistance the parties, involved in the conflict, can concentrate on the real problems. The organization's or the involved people's financial constraints are the most common sources of conflict, but cultural and political contexts of the members can nevertheless be underestimated. Therefore, there are three broad categories in approaching and managing the conflict: negotiation, mediation, and arbitration.

4. Conclusions

Different approaches of the presently used communications, by UN organizations, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, to cope sustainable development are extremely different: changing communication behaviour; communication for Sustainable Development; communication for social changes; communication in health care; Informing, Education and Communication; Communication Network Development; social marketing; social mobilization; communication strategies; participative communication.

Communication is essential for participation and responsabilization, key element for an initiative for sustainable development. Thus, communication can mainly be used for: information exchange, identifying a consensus around some specific issues; supporting the accomplishment of the projects objectives, helping to identify and define the objectives. Conscious and active participation, in any moment of the project's cycle, of each interested part can be facilitated by a simple fair promotion of the development efforts.

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